

VENUS in the Cloister,

OR THE
NUN in her Smock.

In Curious
DIALOGUES,

ADDRESSED
To the Lady Abbess of
Loves Paradise,

By the Abbot Du Prat.

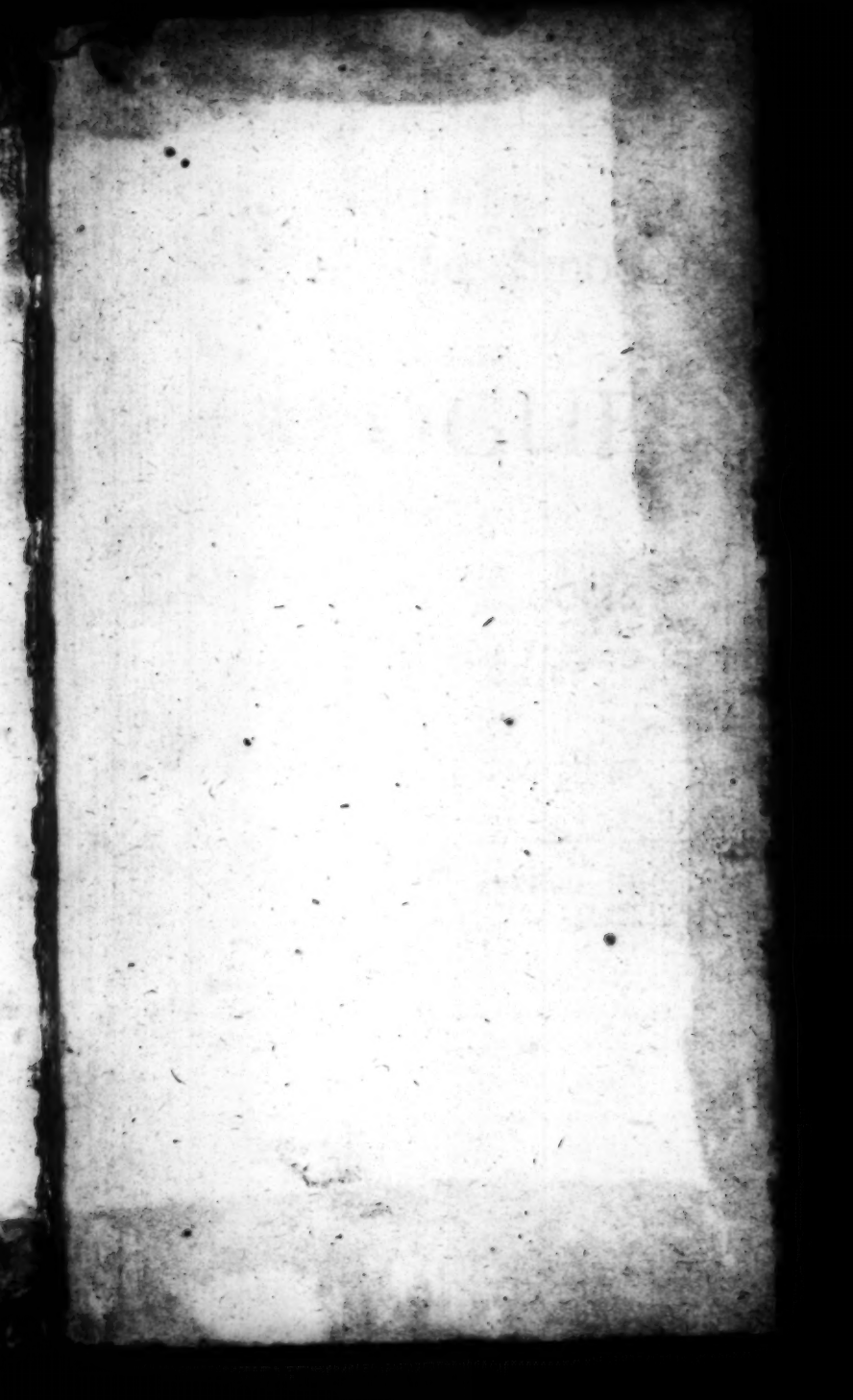
Done out of French.

LONDON,
Printed for *H. Rodes*, next Dore to
the Bear Tavern near *Bride-Lane* in
Fleet-Street, 1683.

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TO
MADAM

D. L. R.

Most Worthy Abbess of
Loves Paradise.

MADAM,

AS it would be a difficult matter for me not to comply with all your desires, I did not at all pause upon the Requests I received from your Ladyship, for the reducing as soon as possible into writing, the secret Entertainments wherein your Society had so great a share. I engaged my self too solemnly in this Gallant Enterprize, for to decline now the going through with it, or to excuse my prosecuting this Work, upon the difficulty there is to give to the Voice and Action that Vivacity they were animated with. I know not if I shall have fully performed my Duty, and satisfied

Feed your expectations, the exercise of two or three mornings will discover to you the Resemblance or Imperfection of this Draught; and will let you know, that if I have not a great deal of Eloquence, I have at least memory enough, faithfully to relate the greatest part of things past. I have so proposed to my self your satisfaction in this Undertaking, that I have indifferently passed over all the reasons which seem to dissuade me from it; the fear only of it's falling into any other hands than yours, has made me somewhat delay sending it to you, and I my self would have been the bearer, if my present affairs would have allowed me that satisfaction, rather than trust to the hazard of a Post or of a Messenger a Packet of this consequence. For in good earnest, if the secret conferences should happen to be made publick, it would Occasion no small scandal both to me and your Lady-ship; and if Actions which are not blamed, but because they are not known, should happen to become a new subject of Criticisme, and furnish arms to all those who are willing to attack us; what a posture would our poor Nun be in, and with what Countenance can she appear, if she had the misfortune of being exposed in her Snock to the sight of all
the

the curious? How much Scandal, Shame, and Disorder would this Occasion! All these considerations are strong, but you will be Obedyed, & you have termed sure & solid reasons by the name of light and tumerous Reflections.

Let what will happen, I wash my hands of all consequences; & to lay aside this serious humour, I may tell your Ladyship, that Sister Agnes has nothing to fear, though her ill Destiny should concern it self in the management of this business; for the Draught I have made of her in my Writings, has represented her in a very exact observation of all her Vows; for indeed, to begin with Poverty; can one be in a greater disengagement from the blessing of this World, than to strip and deprive our selves of them, even to ones very Shift? Can we in our words or our actions shew the Beauty of Nature with more Lustre, than by proposing to ones self for Rule, Nature altogether pure? in short, if one had a mind to make trial of her Obedience without exception, she would be found to have as much Docility as any one of your Novices.

Thus you see Madam, you have a long Letter to a small Work, and a great door to a little House, but no matter: I chose rather to sin against the Rules, than to curb and constrain my self in my writing

to your Ladyship. Impart to your and
my most intimate Friend, what you think
fitting they should know of this matter, and
believe me to be without reserve.

MADAM,

Your Ladyships most Obedient,

and most Affectionate Servant,

The Abbot du Prat.

Venus

Venus in the Cloister,

OR THE
Nun in Her Smock.

First Dialogue.

Sister Agnes, Sister Angelica.

Agnes. Ah Lord, Ah Lord!
Sister Angelica, pray come not
 in my Room, I am not visi-
 ble at present: must you needs
 surprize People thus in this condi-
 tion? I thought I had made the
 Door fast.

Angelica. Well, well, hift, hift,
 why are you thus Alaram'd? a
 great hurt indeed, to have found

A 4

thee

thee changing thy Smock, or doing something better; Intimate Friends ought not in any wise to conceal themselves from one another. Sit thee down upon thy Bed in the same posture thou wast in: He go shut the Door.

Agnes. I assure you my dear Sister, that I should have dyed for shame, if any other than you had surprized me in this pickle; but I am certain you have a great deal of affection for me; wherefore I have no reason to fear any thing from you whatsoever you may have seen.

Ang. Thou hast reason my poor Chucky, to say what thou dost; and though I should not have for thee all the tenderness that a heart is capable of, nevertheless thy mind ought to be at rest as to that. I have been now a Nun these seven years, and I came into the Cloyster at Thirteen; and I may say, that I have not yet by my ill conduct, incurred any ones enmity; having
always

always had detraction in abhorrence, and doing nothing more to my hearts content, than when I render service to any of the Society. This course of Life has procur'd me the affection of the most part; much above all, has assur'd me of that of our *Abbeſs*, which is of no small use to me upon occasion.

Ag. n. I know it, and have been often amaz'd, how you could so manage those who are of a contrary Parry: It is undoubtedly requisite to be as well stock'd with wit and learning, as you are to manage such like Persons. For my part, I have never been able to Bridle my self in my affections, nor endeavour to engage those to be my Friends, who are naturally indifferent to me; It is the imperfection of my Genius which is an Enemy of Constraint, and will in all things act freely.

Ang. The truth is, that it is very
A. 5. sweet

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A. 5. sweet

sweet and delightful to suffer owns self to be led and conducted by that pure and innocent Nature, in only following the inclinations it gives us. But Honour and Ambition which are come to disturb the repose of Cloysters, oblig'd those who are engag'd in e'm, to divide themselves, and to do often out of prudence, what they cannot do out of inclination.

Agn. That is to say, an infinite Number who think themselves Mistresses of your heart, do only possess the painting of it, and that all your protestations assure 'em often of a blessing which they do not really enjoy, I must own that I should very much suspect my being of that number, and that I am a Victim of your Policy.

Ang. Ah my Dear! Thou dost me an injury, dissimulation has no share in such strong friendship as ours! I am wholly thine, and though Nature had produced me
from

from the same blood; it could not have given me sentiments more tender than these I feel. Allow me to Embrace thee, that our hearts may speak to one another in the midst of our Kisses.

Ag. Ah God! how thou graspest me in thy Arms, thou little thinkest I am naked in my Smock! Ah! thou hast set me all on a Fire.

Ang. Ah! how finely doth that Vermilion wherewith thou art at present animated, Augment the Lustre of thy Beauty? Ah! How Amiable does that Brightness render thee which now sparkles in thy eyes? No, no, my pretty Rogue, I will impart to thee my most secret acquisitions, and give thee a perfect Idea of the Conduct of a Prudent Nun; I do not speak of that Austerity and Scrupulous wisdom, which is only nourish'd by fastings, and only coverd with Hair Cloth; there is another Prudence less savage, which all understand-
ing

ing persons make profession of following, and which has no small affinity to thy Amorous Nature.

Agn. I of an Amorous Nature, my Physiognomy must certainly be very deceitful, or else you are not perfectly well acquainted with the Rules of that Science, there is nothing which touches me less than this Passion, and for these three years that I have been a *Nun*, it has not given me the least disturbance.

Ang. That I very much doubt, and am of Opinion, if thou wouldst speak with more sincerity, thou wouldst own that I have said nothing but what is true. How a Maiden of *Sixteen*, of so quick a Wit, and so handsome a Body as thine, should be cold and insensible: that I cannot persuade my self, all thy most careless actions have assur'd me of the contrary. *And that I know not what, which I perceived through the Key-hole of the*

the Door before I came into the Room, makes me know, that thou art a dissembler.

Agn. Ah Lord! Ah Lord! I am undone!

Ang. Go, thou silly Creature, what shouldst thou apprehend from me? prethee tell me, hast thou reason to be afraid of a friend? I told thee this with no other design than to make thee my confident in several such like cases of my own: truly a fine business it is, but what the most scrupulous put in practise, and this is called in Cloistral terms, *The Amusement of the Young, and the Passion of the Old.*

Agn. But pray what did you see then?

Ang. Thou weariest me with thy fooling: dost thou not know that Love banishes all fear, and that if we both mean to live in so perfect a correspondence as I desire we may, thou must hide nothing from me, and I must keep nothing secret.

secret from thee; Bus me my pretty heart; considering thy perverseness, a Discipline would be of good use to punish thee for the small returns thou makest to the kindness one shews thee. Good God, how soft and plump art thou! Ah! thou art of a sweet delicate shape? Let me——

Agnes. Ah! For Heaven's sake let me alone! I cannot recollect myself from this surprize: but in good earnest, what did you see?

Ang. Dost thou not know thou little fool thou? what I might have seen? I saw thee in such a Posture and Action as if thou pleas't I will serve thee in my self; wherein my hand shall at present do thee the Office which thy own a while ago did so charitably render to another part of thy Body; A very great crime indeed that I have discover'd, it is but what my Lady Abbess practices, as she her self says, in the most innocent diversions; It

is but what the Prioress does not reject; but what the mistress of the novices calls *The Exstatical Intromission*? Thou couldst not have believed, that such Holy Souls could have been capable of employing themselves in such profane Exercises? their mean and their outward behaviour have deceived thee, and that shew of Sanctity, with which they know so well how to deck themselves upon occasion, has made thee think they live in their Bodies, as if they were composed of nothing but the Spirit. Ah my dear Child, I will instruct thee with a Number of things which thou art ignorant of, if thou would'st but have some confidence in me; and if thou lettest me but know the disposition of mind and conscience thou art in at present: after which thou shalt be my Confessor, I will be thy Penitent; and I protest, that I will as freely unbosom to thee my heart, as if thou thy self feltest the purest motions of it.

Agn.

Agn. After so many words, I do not think I ought to doubt of your sincerity, wherefore I will not only tell you what you desire to know of me, but I shall even take a sensible pleasure in communicating to you my most secret thoughts and actions. It will be a general Confession which I knew you have no design to prevail of, but the imparting whereof to you, shall only serve to unite us to one another, with a more strict and indissoluble Bond.

Ang. It shall so, without doubt, My Dear, and thou wilt afterwards find, that there is nothing more delightful in this World, than to have a true Friend, who can be the depository of our Secrets, of our Thoughts, and of our very Afflictions. Ah how Easing and Comfortable are those disclosures of ones mind, in such like Occasions. Speak then: Prethee, My Dear, speak. I will sit down by thee upon thy Bed;

Bed : 'Tis not necessary that thou dress thy self, the Season allows thee, to continue as thou art, Me thinks ! Thou art so much the more lovely, and the more thou approachest the Estate wherein Nature brought thee into the World, the more Charms and Beauty dost thou appear with. Hug me, My Dear Agnes, before thou beginnest, and confirm by thy kisses the mutual Protestations We have interchanged of loving one another Eternally. Ah ! how Pure and Innocent are these Kisses ! Ah how full of Tenderness and Sweetness ! Ah how they tickle me with Delight ! Hold a little my Pretty Heart, I am all of a Flame, these Carresses have brought me into a Panting Condition ; Ah God ! How powerful is Love ; and what will become of Me, if meer Kisses Animate and Transport Me to such a Pitch ?

Agnes. It is indeed a very difficult

cult matter to contain ones Self
 within the bounds of ones Duty;
 when We in the least slacken the
 Reines to that Passion; Would you
 believe it *Angelica*? These little
 wantonings, which in the bottom
 are nothing, have had a wonder-
 ful effect upon me? Ah, Ah, Ah,
 let Me breath a little. Methinks
 my heart is too much pent up at
 present: Ah! these sighs give me
 ease. I begin to have for you a
 new Affection, and more Strong
 and Tender than before: I know
 not from whence this proceeds;
 for can meer Kisses cause so much
 disorder in a Soul? The truth is,
 you are very dextrous in your Car-
 resses, and all your wayes are ex-
 traordinary engaging; for you have
 so won upon me, that I am more
 yours than I am my own; Besides
 I am afraid, that in the Excess of
 the satisfaction which I have en-
 joyed; there may have been some
 such things as may give me occa-
 sion

sion to reflect upon my conscience, which I should be very sorry for; for when I am to speak to my Confessour upon those sort of Matters, I dye for shame, and know not where to begin. Ah Lord! How weak are We poor silly Creatures, & how vain are our efforts, for the surmounting the least Sallyes, and the least Attacks of a corrupted Nature.

Ang. This is what I watcht for, I know thou hast ever been something scrupulous upon severall Subjects, and that a certain tenderness of Conscience has given thee no small trouble. This it is to fall into the Hands of a Curs'd and Ignorant Directour: For my part, I will tell thee that I have been taught by a Learned Man, with what air I am to comport my self, for the living happy all my life long; yet without doing any thing that might distast and scandalize the sight of a regular Society, or
that

that was directly contrary to the Commands of God.

Agn. Oblige me Sister *Angelica*, by giving me a perfect Idea of that happy Conduct; believe that I am entirely disposed to hear you, and to suffer my self to be perswaded by your discourses, when I am not able to destroy them by such as are more stronger, and more prevailing. The promise I have given you of disclosing my self wholly to you, shall by these means be but the better observed, because that insensibly in my answers which shall partake in our entertainment, you will observe what Method has been taken with me, and upon what foot I am settled, and you will judge by the sincere Confession I shall make to you of all things, of the good or ill course I shall Steer.

Ang. Dear Child, thou wilt be surpriz'd perhaps at the Lessons I am going to give thee, and thou wilt

wilt be amazed to hear a Maiden between *Nineteen* and *Twenty* years of Age, pretend to Dogmatize and Learning; and to see her Pry into the most hidden secrets of Religious Policy. Do not my Dear, fancy that a Spirit of Vain Glory animates my Words; no, I know I was even less knowing than thou at thy age, and that all I have Learned, has succeeded to an extream Ignorance. But I must likewise own to thee, that I ought to be accus'd of stupidity, if the Cares and Pains several Great Men have taken to form me, and render me perfect, had not been followed with any fruit: and if the Understanding they have given me of several Tongues, had not made me make some Progress by the Reading of good Books.

Agm. My dear *Angelica*, begin your Instructions I beseech you: I Languish under the impatience I am in of hearing your Reasonings: you

you never had a Schollar more attentive, than I shall be to all your Discourses.

Ang. As we are not born of a sex to make Laws, we ought to obey those we have found, and follow as known Truths, many things which of themselves do only pass with others for Opinions. I pretend, my dear Child, to confirm thee truly in the Sentiments thou hast, that there is one Just and Merciful, who demands our homages, and who with the same mouth he forbids us what is Evil, Commands us the practise of what is Good. But as all do not agree what ought to be called Good or Evil; and that an infinite number of actions for which we are made to have a horreur, are received and approved of by our Neighbours; I will tell thee in few words, what a Reverend Father *Jesuite*, who has a peculiar affection for me, told me at the time he endeavoured

endeavoured to open & enlighten my evil mind and understanding, and to render e'm capable of the present Speculations.

As all your happyness, my dear *Angelica* (so spoke he to me) depends on the perfect knowledge of the Religious Estate you have Embraced, I am willing to give you a natural account thereof, and at the same time furnish you with the means of living, in your solitude, without any disquiet or trouble which proceed from such engagements. Now to go on methodically in the Instructions I am to give you, you must remark, that Religion (I understand by that word, all the Monastical Orders) is composed of two Bodyes; whereof, the one is partly Celestial and Supernatural, and the other Terrestrial and Corruptible, which is but an invention of Man; the one is Political, and the other Mystical by Relation to *Jesus Christ*, who

who is the only head of the true Church. The one is permanent, because it consists in the Word of God, which is Immutable and Eternal; and the other is subject to an infinite number of changes, because it depends on that of Man, which is finite and fallible. This being supposed, those two Bodies are to be separated, and a just distinction of them is to be made, that we may know what we are obliged to. But it is no small difficulty to solve them well, the Political as the weakest part, has so united it self to the other, which is the strongest, that all is almost at present confounded, and the voice of man confused with that of God. From this disorder is it that do arise the illusions, scruples, wracks, torments and groanings of Conscience, which often bring a poor Soul into despair; and thence it is, that this yolk, which ought to be light and easie to bear, is become

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by the imposition of men, heavy, painful, and insupportable to many.

Amongst such thick Clouds of darkness, and so visible an alteration of all things, we must wholly and solely apply our selves to the Body of the Tree, without troubling our selves to embrace it's sprouts or it's branches. We must content our selves with Obeying the Precepts of the Sovereign Legislator, and hold for Certain, that all the Works of Supererogation, to which the Voice of men would engage us, ought not to give us a moments disquiet. We must in Obeying that God who Commands us, consider if his Will is written with his own finger, if it proceeds from the mouth of His Son, or if it only departs from that of the People. So as Sister *Angelica*, may without scruple, lighten her chains, embelish her solitary way of Life, and by giving a

B

chearful

cheerful Air to all her Actions, become tame, grow familiar, and be acquainted with the World: she may, continued he, dispence her self, as far as prudence will allow of, from the Execution and performance of all that hodge podge of vows and Promises, which she has indiscreetly made before men: and may again re-enter into the same Rights she stood possess'd of before her engagement, following only these first Obligations.

This is, pursued he, for what regards the inward Peace; Now as for the outward, you cannot without sinning against prudence, dispence your self from seemingly affording a Compliance to the Laws, Customs & Manners, which you subjected your self to, at your entrance into the Cloister. You must also seem zealous and fervent in the most painful Exercises, if any interest of Glory or of Honour depends on those Occupations. You may

may deck your Chamber with sack-cloth and hair Shirts, and by that devout furniture merit as much as she, who indiscreetly shall go lash and mortifie her Body.

Ag. Ah! how rejoiced am I to hear thee; the extream delight I took in thy discourse has hindered me from giving thee any interruption, and that freedom of Conscience which thou beginnest to afford me, by thy discourse, unloads me almost of an infinite number of troubles wherewith I was tormented. But proceed I beseech thee, and tell me what was the design of Policy, in the establishment of so many Orders, whose Rules and Constitutions are so rigorous?

Ans. We may consider in the foundation of all Monasteries, two workmen who hath laboured therein, namely the Founder and Policy. The Intention of the former has often been Pure, Holy, and far from all the designs of the other. And

without having any other prospect than the Salvation of Souls, he has proposed rules and ways of Living, which he thought necessary, or at least useful, to his Spiritual advancement, and to that of his Neighbour. By this means have Desarts been populated and Cloisters built; the Zeal of one Person alone enflamed several with the like, and their Principal Occupation being to sing continually the Praises of the true God, they draw by those Pious exercises whole companies, who united themselves to them, and made but one Body. I speak in this of what passed in the Fervency of the first Ages. Now as for the rest, we must take another Byass in our Reasonings, and not imagine that this primitive Innocence, and this fine Character of Devotion did long preserve it self, and that it has been derived to & inherited by those we see at present.

Policy, which can bear with nothing
faulty

faulty in a State, seeing the encrease of these reclused people, their disorder and extravagancy, was obliged to Provide against further mischief, thereupon banished several, retrenched the Constitutions of others, which she did not think necessary for the publick Interest. It would willingly have got intirely rid of these Blood-suckers, who in an horrible Idleness and Laziness nourished themselves with the labour of the poor people. But this Buckler of Religion wherewith they covered themselves, and the Spirit of the vulgar People, which they had already decoyed and infatuated, have made her to go another way to work, that so such sorts of Companies or Societies might not be entirely useles to the Common Wealth.

Thus Policy has looked upon all those Houses as Common places where it might discharge it self of these following superfluities: It

B 3 makes

makes use of them for the Ease of Families, which the great number of Children would render poor and indigent, if they had not places to retire to: And that their retreat might be without hopes of Return, it has invented Vows, by which it pretends to bind us and wed us indissolubly to the state it has made us embrace: It makes us renounce likewise the Rights which nature has given us, and separates us so from the world, that we no longer make a part thereof. Thou conceivest all this well enough.

Ag. Yes I do: but from whence comes it, that this cursed Policy, which of free people renders us slaves, approves more of those rules which have nothing but what's Austere and Rigorous, than of those that are less severe and painful?

Ang. Why this is the Reason. It considers all Religious Orders, as *Fryers*, *Nuns*, and the Rest, as members retrenched from its Body, and

and as parts separated, whose life does not leane to it particularly for any thing beneficial, but much rather damageable to the publick. And as it would be an action, that would appear inhumane, to take 'em away openly, it makes use of Stratagems, and under pretext of Devotion, it engages those poor Victims (as it were) to cut their own throats, and to load themselves with so many fasts, penances and mortifications, that at length these Innocents fall under 'em, & make way by their death for others, who are to be as miserable, if they have not more understanding. After this manner does a Father often become the Executioner of his own children, and without thinking of it, Sacrifices them to Policies, when he meant to make them an Offering to God.

Agn. Ah the piteous effect of a detestable Government! Thou givest me life, my dearest *Angelica*, in withdrawing me by thy reasons

B. 4.

from

from the High Road that I was following. Few Persons did practice more than I did the most severe Mortifications; I have swing'd my self off with Discipline, Blows, and Lashes, often for to combat the innocent motions of Nature, which my Directour would needs persuade me were horrible disorders. Ah! have I been so mistaken then? it is undoubtedly by the means of that cruel Maxime, That the mitigated Orders are despised. Oh God, Do you thus suffer your name to be abused by unjust executions? and do you allow men to counterfeit you in this manner?

Ang. Ah my poor child, I perceive by these exclamations, that thou still wantest some light, to see clearly and universally into all things; let us pause there; thy mind is not at present capable of a more nice speculation. *Love God and thy Neighbour*, and believe that all the Law is contain'd in these two Commandments.

Agn.

Agn. How, *Angelica*, would you leave me in an error?

Ang. No, my pretty heart, thou shalt be fully instructed, and I will lend thee a Book which will perfect thy Knowledge, and wherein thou wilt easily learn, what I should not be able to explain to thee, without being out of Countenance.

Agn. Thats sufficient; I must needs own I found this saying very pleasant. *That the Cloisters are the Common shoars, where Policy discharges it self of it's superfluities;* Methinks one could not speak after a more sordid and more humbling manner?

Ang. The Truth is, 'tis something a bold expression; but it is not much more offensive, than that of another, who said, *That the Fryers and Nuns were in the Church, what the Rats and Mice were in the Ark of Noah.*

Agn. Right, and I admire the easyness wherewith you utter your

B 5 thoughts,

thoughts, I find I would not for all I may have most Dear, but that the opportunity of my doors being half open had given occasion to our discourse: yet I have comprehended the sence of all your Words.

Ang. Well ! thou wilt then make a good use of 'em ; and that beautiful Body, which is not culpable of any Crime, shall it still be treated, as if it were the most infamous Criminal upon the Earth ?

Agn. No, I intend to give it satisfaction for what I have already made it suffer ; I ask its pardon, and particularly for a severe Discipline, which I but yesterday inflicted upon it by order of my Confessour.

Ang. Kils me, my pretty Child, I am more moved with what thou tellest me, than if I had made the tryal upon my self; that punishment must be the last thou art to mortifie thy self with: But prethee didst

didst thou hurt thy self much?

Agn. Alas ! my zeal was indiscreet, and I fancied the more strokes that I gave, the more did I merit ; my plump Body, and my youth rendered me sensible to the least lashes ; so as at the end of this fair exercise, my Backside was all of a Flame ; nay, for ought I know I broke the flesh, and made a wound, for that I was wholly transported, when I outraged it so cruelly.

Ang. My pretty little Dear, priddie let me see and search it, Ile see what an ill managed fervency is capable of?

Agn. O Lord, Why must I suffer this? what you are then in earnest? I cannot endure it without confusion, Oh! Oh!

Ang. Hey day, to what purpose then was all my discourse, if thou art still withheld by a silly Bashfulness? What hurt is there in granting me my request.

Agn. Indeed indeed I am to blame,
and

and your Curiosity is not to be found fault with; satisfy it according to thy desires.

Ang. So, so, this beautiful face that's alwayes vailed is now uncovered; get thee on thy knees on thy Bed, and douk down thy head a little that I may see the violence of thy Blows. Ah good Lord how 'tis streaked! methinks I see *Chyna Taffetas*, or else the sky at Sun-Setting; you must needs be very devout at the *Mystery of Flagellation*, since you scourge your Buttocks at this rate?

Agn. Well now you have sufficiently contemplated this innocent Outrage? Ah Lord what makes you grope there! Ah let it alone that it may recover its former complexion, and get rid of that stranger of a colour. Pooh, what! do you kiss it?

Ang. Lye still, my pretty Rogue, be not refractory, I have the most Compassionate soul in the World;
and

and as it is a work of mercy to comfort the afflicted, 'Tis my Opinion that I cannot afford them too many Caresses, for the worthily acquitting my self of that Duty. Ah! this part of thy Body is delicately well made: and what a Lustre does it receive from its whiteness and plumpness; I perceive also another part, which is no less well endowed by Nature; *It is Nature it self.*

Agn. Prethee take away thy hand from thence, if thou meanest not to cause there an Inflammation which cannot easily be extinguished? I must needs own to thee my weakness, I am the most sensible Maiden that ever was, and what would not cause in others the least Emotion, often puts me all in disorder.

Ang. What then you are not of so cold a temper, as thou wouldest needs have perswaded me at the beginning of the conversation? and

I fancy thou wilt play thy part, as well as any one I know, when I have put thee into the hands of true honest Fryers ; for this reason I would wish that the time of the retreat, I am going to enter into according to custome, might be deferred, that so we might be together in the Parlour. But no matter, I shall comfort my self with the account thou'lt give me of all that passes, namely, Whether the *Abbot* performs better than the *Jesuite*, or the *Fryer* than the *Monk* ; and in short, if all the whole Priesthood is able to give thee full satisfaction.

Agn. Ah I fancy I shall be very much at a loss in those sorts of entertainments, and that they will find me a mere Novice in point of Amours.

Ang. Trouble not your head, they know what course is to be taken in such occasions, and a quarter of an hour with them will render

der thee more knowing, than all the precepts thou mightest receive from me could do in a week. Come, cover your Back-side for fear thou should'st catch cold; stay let me kiss it once more, and again, and again.

Agn. You are very wanton; do you think I would have born with these follies? no, but that I knew there was no hurt in all this.

Ang. If this was offending I should sin every moment, for the Scholars and Pensionaries, being committed to my care, obliges me to visit their back apartments very often. But yesterday I whipt one rather for my own satisfaction, than for any fault she had committed; I took great delight in contemplating her, she is very pretty, and is already thirteen years of age.

Agn. I long for that employment of Mistress of the School, that I might take the like divertisement! I have a mighty fancy to it, and I should

should be overjoyed, might I see in what thou hast so attentively considered in my Person.

Ang. I am not at all surprized at thy request, we are all made of the same Past. Hold I will put my self into thy posture; well now lift up my Pettecoats and my Smock as high as you can.

Ang. I have a great desire to take my Discipline, and so order the business, that these two twin Sisters may have nothing to reproach me with.

Ang. Oh! Oh, Oh, Hold! What do you do, these sorts of sports do not please me, but when they are not violent? Hold, hold, if thy Devotion should now happen to revive, I should be undone! Oh God! thou hast a very flexible arm; I have a design to associate thee in my Office, but you must use a little more Moderation.

Ag. You have great reason indeed to complain, this is not the tenth part
of

of the blows I have received ; Ile defer the rest till another time, something must be allowed to thy little courage. Dost thou know that this part becomes so much the more beautiful ; a certain flame which animates it, Communicates to it a Vermilion more bright and pure, than all that of *Spain*. Get a little nearer the window that the light may discover all its beauties— So, now its well, I could never be weary with looking on't. I see all I desire, even its very neighbourhood. Why dost cover that part with thy hand.

Ang. Alas, thou mayst look on't as well as the Rest ; if there be any hurt in this occupation, yet it is not prejudicial to any Body, and does not any wise disturb the publick tranquillity.

Agn. How can it disturb it, since we are no longer members of the publick ? besides faults concealed are half pardoned.

Ang.

Ang. Thou hast reason on thy side; for if as many faults were practised in the World (to speak conformably to our Rules,) as are committed in Cloisters, Policy would be obliged to correct their abuses, and put a stop to all their disorders.

Agm. I also believe, that Fathers and Mothers would never suffer their Children to come into our Houses, if they but knew the Disorders that are committed there.

Ang. There's no doubt of that; but as most of the transgressions here are kept secret, and that Dissimulation domineers more in Convents, than in any other place, all those who dwell in 'em do not perceive the faults and disorders, but serve themselves to engage others. Besides the particular interest of Families does often get the better over many other Considerations.

Agm. The Confessours and Directours of Cloisters have a peculi-

ar.

at talent to draw into their nets poor innocent Girls, who fall into a snare when they thought to have found a treasure.

Ang. True, and I have found it so in my own person. I had no inclination towards Religion, I disputed briskly against the reasons of those who perswaded me to it; and I should never have taken the vows, if a Jesuite, who at that time governed this Monastery, had not undertook the matter. A Families concern obliged my Mother, who bore me a tender affection, who had alwayes opposed my being a Nun, to give her consent to it; I resisted it a long time, because I did not foresee, that the *Count de la Roche* my eldest Brother, who by right of Nobility, and the Customs of the Country, would have for himself almost all the Estates and Riches of the Family, and that we being six of us left, without any other support, than what he promised.

mised us, which according to his humour must have been but a very small matter : At length he resigned a thousand pounds, as he told me, of those pretentions, to which were added four hundred more, so that I brought fourteen hundred Pounds in making my profession in this Convent : But to return to the Cunning of him that drew me in, thou mayst know the business was so ordered, that I met with him one afternoon, that I went to make a visit to one of my Couzens who was a Nun, and who long'd to see me in the habit of a Religious.

Agn. Was it not Sister *Victoria*?

Ang. Ay the very same. Thus being all three in the same Parlour, *Victoria* and I, began with the compliments and civilities usual in the First interviews ; they were followed with a discourse of this *Loyalist*, touching the vanities of the age, and

and the difficulty of working out our own Salvation in the World ; which did very much dispose my mind to suffer it self to be seduced : These were nevertheless but slight preparations, he had many other subtilties to insinuate into my Bosom, and to make me espouse the sentiments they lured me with : He told me sometimes, that he observed in my Physiognomy the true Character of a Religious Soul ; that he had a particular gift in the distinguishing thereof ; and that I could not without doing an injury to God (so he said) consecrate to the World so perfect a Beauty as mine.

Agn. He took the right course ; but what answer didst thou make to all this ?

Ang. I presently fell a combating these first Reasons, by others which I opposed against him, which he destroyed with an admirable artifice. Besides, *Victoria* was aiding to the deluding me, and shew'd
me

me religion in such colours, as made it seem to have some Charms, and cunningly hid from me all that was capable of giving me any distaste: In short, the Jesuite, who as I had learnt had made more difficult conquests, used his utmost efforts to make sure of mine. And was successful in his undertaking by the description he gave me of the World and of Religions, and constrained me by the force of his Eloquence, strictly to embrace his Party.

Ang. But prethee what said he that was capable of exercising so absolute a power over thy mind?

Ang. I cannot tell thee all the Circumstances for he held me three hours at the great; thou shalt only know, that he proved to me by Reasons which I thought strong, That this was my Vocation wherein alone I could attain to my Salvation; That there was no safety for me, nor way except that, that the World was full of, Rocks and Precipices

cipices ; That the Excess of the Religious was much better than the Moderation of the Worldly ; That the repose and Contemplation of the former, was at the same time more delightful and more meritorious, than the action and all the Hurry of the latter ; That it was in Cloisters alone, that one could converse familiarly with God ; and by consequence to render ones self worthy of so Holy and so Excellent a Communication, we were to flye the Company of men. That it was in these places that the remnant of the Ancient Christians were preserved, and where might be seen the true Image of the primitive Church.

Ang. It was hardly possible to speak with more Eloquence, and at the same time with more Cunning ; for I observe that he said not to thee a word of the rigors and Austerities, that might startle thee and divert thee from following the bait.

Ang. Thou art mistaken ; he forgot

got nothing. But the Pains and Mortifications he told me of, were seasoned with so much sweetness, that I found 'em not distasteful to my palate. I will hide nothing from you, said he to me; these devout Societies, whose number I hope you will shortly augment, labour day and night by their Austerities and Penances, to subdue the Pride and Insolence of Nature: They exercise over their Senses a violence which lasts alwayes; without dying their Soul is separated from their Body; and equally despising grief and Voluptuousness, they live as if they were only made of the Spirit alone. This is not all, pursued he, with a perswasive tone, they make a rigorous Sacrifice of their Liberty, they strip themselves of all their goods to enrich themselves only with hopes, and impose by solemn vows the necessity of a perpetual Vertue.

Agn. This Disciple of Loyala, was a Master Orator, I wish I knew Him.

Ang.

Agn. Thou knowest him well enough, and I will tell thee some small circumstances of his Life, which will make thee believe, that he knows how to play more than one part ; But I must First make an end of the rest. You see, *Made-moiselle*, the Chains, Rigours, and Mortifications I offer you ; but would you believe it, said he to me, those Holy Souls whereof I spoke to you just now, are proud of this Yoak, they Glory in this Servitude, and there is no manner of Severe Torment to suffer, but what they esteem a great reward ; they make all their Amours and Passion consist in the Service of Jesus Christ. It is he alone who puts 'em all into a Flame in case he does but touch e'm ; It is he alone who is the only Master of their Hearts, and who knows how to make their Torments to be succeeded with incredible Joyes, Delights and Transports.

C

Agn.

Agn. Without doubt thou wast charm'd with this florrid Talker.

Ang. Yes, my pretty Child, I was perswaded by this Quack; His words changed me in a moment, they snatcht me from my self, and made me eager'y court what I had constantly avoided: I became the most scrupulous person in the World; and because he had told me, that out of the Cloister I could not work my Salvation, I imagined until I was got into it, that I had all the Devils about me. Since that time he himself has endeavoured to make me recover my Right Senses, he has given me such instructions, as were capable of freeing me out of the Errors he had plung'd me in, and it is to His Morals that I owe all the Repose and Quiet of mind that I now possess.

Agn. Prethee tell me quickly who this man is.

Ang. Tis Father Rancourt.

Agn.

Agm. Ah Lord! He is an Enchanter. I was once at Confession to him, I took him for the most Devout man in the World; the Truth is, he knows to perfection the Art of insinuating himself into peoples affections, and perswades what he desires. But I bear him a grudge, for having left me in the error he found me in, and from whence he might have disingaged me.

Ang. Ah! He is too prudent to run such hazards! He saw thee under an extraordinary Bigottry, in horrible scruples, and knew that a Maiden is not so easily reduced from one extremity to the other. Besides if one Saint alone should enlighten all the Blind, there would be no more Miracles for others to do; thou understandest me? that is to say, If thou had hadst Faith, thou wouldst have been Cured, and that if that wise Directour had found in thee some dispositions to follow his

Ordinances, he would have been this Physician.

Agn. I believe it ; but I had as lieve have the Obligation thereof to thee as to him. Tell me I beseech thee, some Circumstances of the Life of that Blessed Man.

Ang. I will so, My Pretty Heart, but Kiss me, and Embrace me very Amourously first: Ah! Ah! that's fine. Ah how am I charm'd with the Beauty of thy Mouth and Eyes! one of thy Kisses alone Transport me more than I am able to Express!

Agn. Begin then? Ah thou art a mighty Lover of Kissing!

Ang. I am never weary of Caresing what is Lovely. Since you knew Father *Raucourt*, it is not necessary that I tell thee, that he is the man of the World, the most intriguing, the most Dextrous and the most ingenious that can be found. I will only tell thee, that in point of Amity, he is nice to the highest Degree,

Degree, and as he sets some value upon himself, many qualities are requisite for to please him. Amongst all his Conquests he reckoned none more Glorious, than that he had made of a young *Nun* of a Convent in this City, who is called Sister *Virginia*.

Ag. I have heard talk of her, as of a perfect Beauty, but I know no other Circumstances of the Matter.

Ang. It is the Loveliest Person that can be seen, if the Picture her Gallant has shewed me of her be Faithful; as for Wit she abounds with it as much as she can desire, she is jocund and Facetious, Playes upon several Instruments, and Sings with Charms capable of bewitching peoples Hearts. Our Jesuite had already acquired her intirely to himself for some Months, and they both enjoyed that sweet Tranquility which makes all the Happiness of Lovers; when Jealousie began

the disorder I am going to tell you of.

There was in the same *Monastery* a *Nun*, for whom the Father had shewed some kindness, and to whom he had made several Visits upon that design: He had also received from her such Favours, as were capable of engaging a man of the least Fidelity: But the Lustre of *Virginia's* Beauty, was too prevailing over his Heart; he inwardly disengaged himself from that first commerce, and only afforded that poor Mayden, the outside and appearance of a Real Love. She quickly perceived the change, and saw clearly she had a Rival, who shar'd with her in his offerings. She nevertheless dissembled her spight and vexation; and seeing she had to do with a Rival who surpassed her in all things, she did not entertain the design of attacking her, but vowed the Ruine of him who despised her.

To bring this Enterprize of hers
the

the more easily about, she Studied the Houres and Moments that *Virginia* met with this Religious Lover; and as she had learnt by experience, that he did not content himself with Words, nor light Favors, she fancied she might reasonably surprize them in certain Exercises, the Knowledg whereof rendred her Mistriss of the fate of her faithless Lover: She was a long while before she could discover any thing strong enough: She perceived indeed two or three times that poor Father warming his hand in *Virginia's* Bosome: She saw e'm Interchange some Kisses with an incredible fervency; but this passed for trifles in her mind; and as she knew that these sorts of Actions were in Cloysters only reckoned for Pccadilloes, which Holy Waters washes clean; she held her peace, waiting for a better Occasion to speak.

Agnes. Ah I am in a terrible fright
C-4 for

for poor *Virginia*!

Ang. Our Lovers not in the least suspecting the Ambushes that were laid for them, took no measures to avoid them: They met two or three times a Week, and wrote Letters when Prudence Obliged them to part for some time from one another. The Fathers Letters, whose expressions are tender and passionate made a perfect conquest over *Virginia*. He went to see her after eight dayes absence, and observed he should obtain from her what she had alwayes refused him before. In the mean while her Rival was not Idle, for Corresponding with the Matron that was the Door-Keeper, she had notice of the Jesuites arrival, and not doubting but that after so long an interval, they would proceed to such privacies, as she could have wished for her self, she went Transported with a Jealousy into a Nook hard by the Parlour, where by the means of a little

little Chink she had made, she might discover to the very least motions of those who entertained one another there, and hear their most secret Conversations.

Agn. Now does my fear revive! Ah I have a spight against that Curious Creature for disturbing so maliciously the Repose of two unhappy Lovers!

Ang. That the Depositions she designed to make of what she saw, might be the more Authentick, and received without difficulty, she took another *Nun* with her, who might give the same Evidence. Being thus, both posted in the place I mentioned, they perceived our two Lovers entertaining one another more by their looks and their sighs, than by Words; they grasped one anothers hands, and with languishing looks spake some tender words, which departed more from their Hearts than from their Mouth. This Amorous Contemplation followed

with opening a little four square Casement, which was toward the midst of the grate, and which served for pretty big Packquets to pass through of such as made presents to the *Nuns*: Then it was that *Virginia*, received and gave a thousand Kisses, but with such great Transports, such surprizing saillies, that Love it self could not have augmented the ardour of them; Ah my dear *Virginia*, began my Passionate Priest, would you have us stop here? Alas! What small returns do you make to those who Love you, and how well do you practise the art of tormenting them? Alas! How, replied our Vestal, can I make you any other present after having given you my Heart? Ah! How Tyrannical is your Love! I know what you desire, I know too that I have had the weakness to make you hope for it, but neither am I ignorant, that it is all my Blessing and all my Riches,

ches, and that I cannot grant it you but by reducing my self to Extremity. Cannot we remain in the terms we are under, pass together soft delightful moments, and enjoy Pleasures so much the more perfect, as they are Pure and Innocent? If your Happiness, as you say, does only depend on what I have most dear, you can be happy but once, and I alwayes miserable, since it is a thing that cannot be recovered. Believe me, let us Love as a Brother Loves a Sister, and let us allow this Love all the freedom that can be imagined, with exception to one alone.

Agn. And what answer did the *Jesuite* make to all this?

Ang. During the Discourse he said not a Word, but leaning with his head on one of his hands, he look't with Eyes full of Languishment on her who spoke to him; after which, taking her by the hand through the grate, he told her after

a touching manner! Must we then change our Method, and no longer Love as before? Can you consent to this *Virginia*, for my part I can retrench nothing of my Love, and the Rules you have newly prescribed to me, not to be received by a true Lover. He exaggerated to her afterward, with so much heat, the excess of his Flames, that he absolutely disconcerted her; and drew from her an Oral Promise, of granting him within some few days, what alone would render him perfectly happy. He then made her come nearer to the grate, and having made her mount upon a pretty high stool, he conjured her to allow him, at least to satisfy his sight, since he was barred all other Liberty; she obeyed him after some resistance, and suffered him to see and grope the parts consecrated to Chastity, and Continency. She for her part would also needs satisfy her eyes with the like Curiosity, and the

Je-

Jesuite who was not insensible, easily found the means for her so doing, she obtained from him what she desired with more easiness than she granted his request. Then was the fatal moments of 'em both, and what our Spyes desired: They contemplated with an extraordinary satisfaction, the fine parts of their Companions Body, which the *Jesuite* laid to view, and felt and groped with transports of an enchanted Lover: Sometimes they Admired one part, and sometimes another, according as the Officious Father turned and changed the scituation of his Mistress; so that when he considered the fore part, he exposed her Breech to the light, because her Petticoats all round were lifted & tuckt up above her middle.

Agn. Methinks I am present at this spectacle, so naturally dost thou tell the Story!

Ang. At length they terminated their wantonings, and our two Sisters

ters retired with a design to put a stop to these ill managed Amours, and to hinder the effect of *Virginia's* promise. By a particular happiness for that Poor innocent Creature, the *Nun*, whom her Rival had associated to her in the Consideration of what had passed, had a very tender kindness for her, and endeavoured to find a byass for Ruining the *Jesuite*, without injuring her she loved; she gave her to understand what she knew of her interigues, assured her of doing nothing to her prejudice, provided she would promise her to break intirely off with that *Priest*, and not have for the future the least Communication with him. *Virginia* extreamly ashamed at what she heard, engaged her self to all that was desired, only earnestly begs the *Jesuites* Reputation may be saved, because it was impossible to wound the one, without doing some damage to the other; she protested

tested she would see him no more, and that the Letter she was going to write to him never to return again, should be the Last he should receive from her. These conditions were accepted by both, though with trouble; they embrace *Virginia*, of whom they were become Enamoured, and said at parting, that they would supply the Fathers place, and enter into a strict friendship with her.

Ag. She came off then at a pretty cheap Rate, I fancy she owed this indulgence to her Beauty, and to her other qualities, which rendered her without doubt Amiable to her very Enemy?

Ang. We are not yet at the end of our History. *Virginia* immediately wrote a Letter to Father *Raucourt*, & therein acquainted him with all that had happened, and with the Conditions she had bound her self to, to save both her and his Honour; she remonstrated to him the danger he would

would expose himself to, if he came to see her again ; and lett him also know, that it was impossible she could receive any of his Letters, unless he made use of a particular trick, to avoid their being surprized ; she ended with protestations of a constant Love and proof against all the most secret attacks of Jealousy, and made him hope, that time would dissipate that storm, which threatened them. I do not say with what surprize this Father received and read this Letter, which struck him, as it were, with a Thunder-Bolt, he saw it was not convenient to make any Answer to it, and that he must be forc'd to buckle to an unhappy Accident, which opposed his good Fortune, in the very moment he was ready to enjoy it.

Three Weeks was already pass'd of this Widdow-hood, when *Virginia* growing weary of that solitary Life, found by a marvellous piece

piece of cunning, the means of hearing from her Lover, and letting him hear from her: She pretended to have forgotten to send Father *Raucourt* a square Bonnet, which he had given her to make in the time of their late Familiarities. Her Rival told her, that she needed but to give it to her, and that she would have it delivered to her by a *Touriere*. This was done accordingly, the messenger had notice after what manner she was to speak to him; she acquitted herself punctually of her Commission, and the *Jesuite* after he had received the Bonnet, he desired her to wait a moment in the Church, that he might have time to think of what he saw. After some small reflection, he suspected the stratagem, ript open the Bonnet in a certain place, and there found *Virginia's* Letter: Without examining it much, he made a speedy answer to it, which he put in the same place

place, and clos'd it up the best he could, with two or three stitches of a needle: he came again to the *Touriere*, whom he desired to carry back the Bonnet, that it might be mended, because that it was much too narrow for him; that he had tryed it upon several other of the Convent, that he might exempt the Person from the trouble she might have in reforming it, but that there was not a Father it fitted; that for the rest he was obliged to her for the Patience she had had to wait so long. The good Sister made answer by her Bows to the Fathers Civilityes, and carryed back the four squar'd Bonnet to the Monastery, deliver'd it by order of her, who sent her into the hands of *Virginia*, who was overjoyed to hear there the news of him she loved, and for that her Artifice had had such good success.

Agn. It must be confessed that
Love

Love is full of Invention.

Ang. This Commerce lasted for above a Month, there was still something to be altered and mended in this Venerable Bonnet; once in three days it was to be carryed to the *Colledge* and back again to the *Monastery*. Yet no body imagin'd that there was any Mystery in such a thing as that; no notice was taken of it; and they might still have made use of this Postilion, had it not been for this accident which spoiled all.

Agn. Oh Lord, I fancy the whole Plot was discovered by the *Tonriere*.

Ang. No, thou art mistaken. It happen'd that on a fast day, that the Porter of the *Jesuites* was out of humour, perhaps for that he had not stuffed his Gutts, at his usual Rate: The *Tonriere* who had an infinite number of Commissions, and amongst others that of the Bonnet, rang twice or thrice at the
Colledge

Colledg Gate, for to discharge her self as soon as possible of her Message. This good *Fryer* went out of the Garden he was in, and being come almost out of Breath; thinking it was the Bishop or Archbishop, or some other Grandee, who had rung after so Commanding a manner, was much surprized at the sight of the poor Sister; she had nothing else to say to him, than to deliver the four square Bonnet into the hands of Father *De Rancourt*. This pettish man being vex'd at so many troublesome visits, upon so small a matter, fell into a Passion, and said; That Bonnet walked very often, and that he would put it into the hands of a man who should make it withdraw for a while. The *Tou-riere* excusing her self as well as she could, away she went, and the Rector waiting for a Companion in the Porters Lodge to go out together, having heard the Dialogue, called

called the Brother, and would needs know the subject of the dispute, and why he treated so rudely the Persons who had business with those of the *Colledg*. This man, seeing himself school'd by his Superior, told him all he thought of this Bonnet; told him that it had already jogg'd & jaunted above 20. times between the *Colledge* and the *Monastery*: that there must without doubt be some hidden design in this matter; and that if His Reverence was so pleas'd, he would search the Cap which he said was counter-band; which he did at that same instant, and with one touch with his Cissars he brought to light the *Fifteenth Infant of the square Bonnet*, which came in a direct Line from Sister *Virginia*.

Agn. Oh Lord! how difficult a matter it is to save ones self, when pursued by an ill Destiny, and that it has sworn ones ruine. What happened of all this business?

Ang.

Ang. It happened that the Father was confined into another province, and that poor *Virginia* has been mortified with some Penances; from hence came that Proverb, *That there is a great deal of malice under a Jesuits four square Bonnet.*

Agn. Good Lord! It was for her alone that I was in fear, but tell me how this came to the knowledge of the *Prioresse*?

Ang. I should be too tedious in entertaining thee with one and the same thing; In the first Conversation after my retreat, I will tell thee more upon this Subject; I will shew thee two Infants of the four squar'd Bonnet, and will acquaint thee with the Fate of their Father and Mother. Think only at present, my Dearest, that I am going to spend eight or ten dayes after a very doleful manner, since I shall be barred having the least conference with thee; I am going to write to my three honest Friends
that

that they may Visit thee during that time: There is an Abbot, a Fryer, and a Capuchine.

Agn. What a mixture ! and what wouldest thou have me do with all those people whom I know not?

Ang. Thou needest only be Obedient, they will teach thee sufficiently what shall be thy Duty, for the satisfying and contenting them. Here, take this Book I lend thee, make a good use of it, it will instruct thee with many things, and will give thy mind all the quiet thou canst wish for. Kiss me my poor Child, Kiss me for all the time I am to be absent. I should pass my retreat after a very pleasant rate, If my Directour was as Amiable and as Docible as thou art. *Adieu.* My heart, Dress thee, and be sure that thou keepest all our amorous matters secret, and prepare thy self to give me an account of all thy Diversions when my Exercises are expired.

End of the First Dialogue.

Venus in the Cloister ;
 OR THE
Nun in Her Smock.

Second Dialogue.

Sister *Angelica*, Sister *Agnes*.

Angelica. Ah ! God be Praised,
 I begin to breath again; never
 was I more pestered with De-
 votions, Mysteries and Indulgences,
 than since I left thee; I nauseate
 strangely all those Superstitions.
 How dost thou do? What not a Word?
 Why do you Laugh?

Agnes. I am quite ashamed to
 appear before your eyes again; I

D

fancy

fancy you know all, to the very least particulars, of what has been said, and done, since your absence.

Ang. And who shou'd tell it me? What you railly me? Come, come thy wayes into my Room, and think where you are to begin to give me a faithful Narrative. For my part I came out of the hands of a savage Creature, who would have made a person of any other humour than mine mad, I mean my Directour; It is the worst natur'd, and most ignorant man of his Character. I fancy he has made me gain all the Indulgences and Pardons that were ever granted by the Popes, since *Gregory* the Great to *Innocent* the XI. If I had followed his Order, I had set my Body in Blood by the Discipline he prescribed me; not that I let him see much malice in the confessions I made him, but because he imagines, that to be in the way of Paradise, one must be as dry, as lean, and
as

as himself, and that it is sufficient to be something cheerful and plump to merit all manner of Penances. Judge now, how I have spent my time, and if I had not reason to think it tedious?

Ag. For my part I must tell thee, that thou hast given me Directors, who have tyred me little less than thine have done; I know not if I have gain'd Indulgences with 'em; but I am certain that to gain them, many Persons do not do so much as we have done.

Ang. That I do not doubt of. But tell me a little News of our Abbot, and let me know if he is capable of any great matter.

Ag. Him it was, I first saw, and in whom I found the most heat; there is nothing more lively, and more animated, and there's pleasure in hearing him discourse. I was at the afternoons Recreation, when word was brought me, that he ask'd to speak with me. As I knew the Lady

Abbot was indisposed, & I sent him
 word by the Porter, that he should
 go into the Great Parlor, and that
 he would not grow impatient. I
 made him waite for a large quar-
 ter of an hour, because I changed
 my Valet, and some other things,
 that I might appear the nearer
 before him, and endeavour to an-
 swer the hopes he had of seeing a
 Person, of whom he had heard so
 advantageous a Description. At the
 first I seem'd something mute and
 silent, answering very seriously to
 the civilities he paid me, but this
 did not discourage him, on the
 contrary he took an occasion to tell
 me very boldly, that he knew the
 Fair Ladies had the freedom to
 speak after a certain indifferent
 manner, which would be unbecom-
 ing in others, but that he had rea-
 son to hope, that presenting him-
 self under the Favour and Recom-
 mendation of my best Friend, his
 Visit could not but be grateful to
 me.

16 *Agd.* He passes for a Witt; and we may say that his great Travels, accompanied with much experience, have added to his natural advantages all the perfection he had wanting.

17 *Agd.* I know not what thou hadst told him of me, but I found he made great Progress for a first Visit. He turned the Conversation upon the Austerity of Religious Houses, and endeavoured to persuade me by an infinite number of Reasons, not to follow the indiscreet Zeal of several, terming all those ridiculous, who indifferently put in practice all sorts of Mortifications. He made me laugh at the Natural account he gave me, of what hapned to him in Italy with a Nun of St. Bennet, of whose cunning he made use of to see her as often as he pleas'd, and how long he received such favours from her, as were to be the effect of his Assiduities. He assured me that be-

fore that acquaintance, he had al-
 wayes believed, it was only amongst
 the Nuns, that the true Vestal
 Chastity was preserved, and that
 he had alwayes perswaded him-
 self, that those recluse Souls, lived
 in so perfect a Continency, as that
 of the Angels; but that he had found
 the contrary, and that nothing per-
 fect is meahly spoiled; and that
 a thing keeps in its Corruption, the
 same degree it had in its Goodness;
 he had observed there was nothing
 more dissolute than all the Reclused
 and Bigots, when they find occa-
 sion to divert themselves. He shew-
 ed me a certain Instrument of Glass,
 which he had received from her,
 whom I have spoke to thee of,
 and assured me, that he had learnt
 from her, there were above fifty of
 the same in the *Monastery*, and that
 all from the *Abbes* to the last Pro-
 fessour, managed it oftner than their
 Beads.

Ang. That's fine! but thou tel-
 left

left me nothing of what concerns thy self.

Agn. What wouldest thou have me tell thee? He is the most wanton man upon the face of the earth. At the second visit he made me, I could not dispence my self from granting him some favour; he opposed all my reasons with Morals so strong, and so full of artifice, that he rendered all my Efforts useless and to no purpose: He shewed me three Letters from our *Ab-
bess*, which assured me that let me do what I would, I should only walk in her steps. She has spent whole nights with him, and only terms him in her Letters the *Ab-
bot of Loves Paradise*. I represented to him, that the Grate was an insurmountable obstacle, and that he must of necessity content himself with some slight wantonings, since it was impossible to proceed any farther. But he gave me sufficiently to understand, that he

was much more knowing than I, and shewed me two Boards, that were to be lifted up, the one on his side and the other on mine, and which gave sufficient passage for a Person: He told me that it was by his advice, that the Lady *Abbes* had so ordered the business, that she had call'd it the *Streight* of *Gilbraltar*, and that she one day told him, that he must not venture passing it without being well provided with all things necessary, particularly if he had any designe to stop at the Pillars of *Hercules*. Thus after several contests on both Sides, The *Abbot* pass'd the *Streight*, and arrived at the Port where he was received, but it was not without difficulty, and only after having assured me that his entrance should have no ill consequence; I allowed him to anchor as long as was necessary to render him happy; it was the seventh of the *Month* of *August*, which was a day that my
Lady

Lady *Abbeſs* was uſed to be Employed in great Ceremonies, but that her indispoſition had obliged to defer till the next *Month* following what ſhe commonly obſerved in this. He told me that ſhe had created the ſecond year ſhe was *Abbeſs* an Order of Knighthood, which was compos'd only of *Prieſts*, *Monks*, and *Abbots*, and Religious and Eccleſiaſtical Perſons. That thoſe who were admitted into it, took an Oath to keep the ſecret of the Order, and call'd themſelves the *Knights of the Grate*, or of *St. Lawrence*; that the Colour which was given them at the day of their Reception, was compos'd of the Cyphers of my Lady *Abbeſs*, interwoven with Flames of Love, and that below hung a Medal of Gold, Reſembling the Patron of the Order, lying all naked upon a *Grate*, in the miſt of Flames, with theſe Words, *Ardorem Craticula Fovet*, That is to ſay, *The Grate Augments*

my Heart. He shewed me the Col-
lar he had received, and after he
had made me some presents of cu-
rious Books, we parted from one
another until a new Interview.

Ang. Thou hast told me nothing
now touching this Order establish-
ed by my Lady *Abbes*; my Lord
Bishop of ✠✠✠, is the First Knight of
it, the *Abbot de Beaumont* the Second,
the *Abbot du Prat* the Third, the
Prior de Pompiere the Fourth; these
are the Principals and the First in
date; they are followed by *Jesu-
ites*, by *Jacobins*, *Augustins*, *Carme-
lites*, Fathers of the *Oratory*, and
the Provincial of the *Cordeli-
ers*. So as at the last Promotion,
which was made in the year last past,
the Number was Twenty-two. But
it is observable, that there is a
great deal of difference between
them, and that they cannot all en-
joy equal Priviledges; there are
of them who call themselves the
Blew Ribonds, and these are those
who

who are the *Almightyes*, who have the secret of the Order, and who dispose of my Lady *Abbesses* affairs as my Lady *Abbess* manages theirs. As for the others their Power is limited; it has bounds which they cannot pass. And they have little more advantage than the Aspirers, until that by their Zeal, their Prudence and their Discretion, they have rendered themselves worthy of being of the Great Profession. Of all the *Monks*, the *Capuchins* alone are excluded, because the Beard which disguises them so much, has rendered them Odious to our *Abbess*, who says, that she cannot imagine that any Person of our Sex can bear any Good Will to those Satyres. But to the purpose tell me some tydings of Father *Kital* of *Charenton*.

Agn. I should never have believed no more than my Lady *Abbess*, that a *Capuchin*, could have been capable of a Gallantry, if this man had

had not perswaded me of it by his Conduct. He came to see me three dayes after our *Abbot*, we went into the Parlour of *St. Augustin*, and there it was that he tickled my fancy with so many wanton discources, that I could not have expected more from a professed Courtier. Besides, he spoke so boldly that I was asham'd to hear come out of the mouth of a man, words at first something *Libertine*, but at length the most dissolute the greatest Debauchee could have made use of. I could not forbear making him sensible of my astonishment, and letting him know, that there was excess in his transports; which made him use some moderation in the matter. He made me three visits during thy retreat, and at the last he obtained no great Favours from me, because the Parlour where we were had not the conveniencies of the others. I will only tell thee, that he prepar-
ed

red me sufficient matter to laugh at, in that having by his efforts loosened one of the Bars of the Iron in the Grate, and thinking he had made a passage sufficiently large, to pass through it, he ventured, notwithstanding my dissuasions: But through he could not get, for as much as having passed his head, and one of his shoulders with a great deal of difficulty, his Cowle got hold of one of the spikes without, so notwithstanding all his struggling he could not get rid of that snare: I could not contemplate him in that posture, without bursting out a laughing, I made him get back again as soon as he could, and caus'd him to put the Grate so as it was before. He gave me three or four Books which he had mention'd to me in his first Visit, and withdrew very ill satisfied with his Adventure.

Ang. I am sorry for this disorder, for without doubt this will have discourag'd him.

Ag.

Ag. Discourag'd him ! Good Lord ! He's no man, take my word, to be discouraged ; he is the most impudent and most dissolute of all men ; I hope hee'l be here yet before the Weeks at an end, he has promised me the *Collection of the secret Amours of Robert d, Abrissel* ; he began to tell me the story, but I can't believe it true, it must needs be a piece of Invention.

Ang. Thou'rt mistaken, there is nothing more true ; and several grave Authors write, that he was used to Lye with his *Nuns* that he might try 'em, and observe at the same time in his own Person, how far the strength of vertue can prevail, which combate the temptations of the flesh ; he thought this very meritorious in him, and this it was that gave occasion to *Godfrey of Vendome*, to term this Devotion pleasant and ridiculous, in a Letter he wrote to *St. Bernard*, and calls this fervency a new kind of

Mar-

Martyrdome; This has hitherto been the occasion of that mans not being placed in the Calender of the Saints by the Court of Rome, he is nevertheless term'd Blessed.

Agm. We must own, that there are many abuses practised in our Religion, and I am not now at all surprized, that so many Nations have separated themselves from our Church, to apply themselves literally to the Scriptures. The Father *Mendicant* whom I saw during thy retreat, made me Visibly remark all the faults of the present Government, as to what concerns Religion: he is a man who for his Age, (for he is not yet Six and Twenty Years Old) possesses all the Sciences that can render a person accomplished of what Character soever he may be; he speaks Universally upon all subjects, but with so easy an air that Savours nothing of the *Pedant*.

Ang. I perceive thou art pleased

ed with him, he is well made, and
a lusty handsome *Savvy*, for my part
I always call him my *swinging*
Fox, in what Parlour sawest thou
him?

Agn. I saw him twice, he first
was in the Parlour of St. *Joseph*,
and the last was in that of my *La-*
dy Abbess.

Ang. Well, well, that is to say,
he pass'd the *streights*, he well de-
served it, and there's delight in see-
ing him play his part.

Agn. He gave me two small vi-
als of *Essence*, which have a won-
derful Odour, he was perfumed from
top to toe, and with so Animated
a *Vermilion*, that I at first suspect-
ed he had been at the little pot;
but I found the contrary afterwards,
and saw that the *Red* only pro-
ceeded from the fervency of his
Passion. I was infinitely pleased
with his discourse, and his way of
toying and wantoning, and I made
no difficulty of granting him the
passage

passage I had so much disputed with our *Abbot*. I represented to him, that there was reason to fear, that the follies we two committed would be followed with a third: I understand you, replied he, and at the same time took a little Book out of his pocket which he gave me, the title of it was, *Soft and easy Remedies against dangerous swelling*. He told me it would teach me what I had to do in such an occasion, he put a little Conserve into my mouth, which I found had no ill taste; I know not if it contain'd any secret Vertue, but immediately he put himself into a posture of attacking the Pillars of *Hercules*.
Ans That is to say, swinging *Tomzer* won thy Heart.

Ans. Certain it is that he shar'd it with the *Abbot*; I cannot tell thee to whom I could give the preference: One thing alone displeased me in the *Mendicant*, which is, that having seen about his neck a Reliquary

Reliquary of Guilt Vermilion, which he wore upon his heart ; I had the curiosity to open it, but I was very much surprized to find nothing else, than a kind of a down, and hairs of different colours, divided into Figures and Flowers in several Branches, and very well done. He own'd to me that these were the Favours of all his Mistresses, and desired me to countenance likewise his Devotion with the like, and that what I should bless him with a grant of should be put in the finest place of all ! Well in short I complied with his humour ! I forgot to tell thee that there was in Characters of Gold, this inscription in the midst of a Chrystal which covered all this fine Merchandizes, *Relicks of the Holy Beard.* Upon the outside of the Reliquary there was Engraven a *Cupid*, in a Throne, with this Noddy of a *Fryar* prostrate at his feet, with these Words which I have remembred, though

though they be Latin, *Ave Lex, Fus, Amor.* I blam'd him for this irreverence, which I termed Impiety, but he did but laugh at it, and said he could not refuse these Worshipps to those who merited all manner of adorations; and that if I knew but how to decypher seven other letters, which were on the other side, I should make many more Exclamations. And indeed having looked upon it again, I saw the seven following Letters, *A. C. D. E. D. L. G.* But he would not unriddle the matter to me, though I was very earnest with him, and seem'd to take pett, but he perceived that I was not heartily angry with him, therefore he hug'd me once more, and we took leave of one another.

Ang. I am overjoyed, my Pretty Creature, that all things have succeeded so according to my wishes; this is but a Sample of what I will do for thee. And I will procure

cure thee the acquaintance of a Jesuite, to whom thou wilt undoubtedly give the Prize, and wilt own that he has got the advantage over all the others. But he is jealous of his acquaintance, even to Excess, tis the only fault that thou canst find in him, otherwise a handsome man, gallant, a florid talker and ignorant of nothing that can come to the Knowledge of a Person.

Ag. That imperfection is great enough of all conscience, to hinder me from having any Communication with him.

Ang. And why so? Thou wilt find it a difficult matter to meet with a man who really Loves and is not jealous. I remember I was once acquainted with a *Benedictin*, who fancied that all the *Nuns* of *St. Bennet* could not converse with *Fryers* of another Order without injustice, and that they stole from him and his Fraternity all the Favours they

they bestowed upon the Capuchins, and his reasons were as follows. It is not to be doubted, but that men, who have devoted themselves to Religion, are subject to the same passions and Motions, with those who are in the World. Wherefore said he, the Founders of Orders who were very prudent Persons, did not only raise Cloisters for those of their own Sex, but at the same time built the like for Maydens, that without having recourse to strangers, they might ease and comfort one another from time to time, in the rigour of their Vows. In the beginning this was practised, according to the intent of the Institutors; by which means there arose not the least scandal; but at present these Places savour too much of the General Corruption; we see without any trouble, the *Benedictine Fryer*, in Conjunction with the *Jacobin Nun*; the *Cardeliet* with the *Benedictine Priest*; and from this horrible

horrible Confusion, nothing can arise and proceed but Monsters.

Agn. That thought was pleasant enough.

Ang. Alas! Cryed he, what would those Holy Founders say at the sight of so many Adulterers, if they return'd upon the Earth? How many Thunderbolts and Anathemas would they hurl against their own Children! Would not St. Francis send again the Capuchins to the Capuchinesses, the Cordeliers to the Nuns of the same Order: Saint Dominick, and St. Bernard and all the rest, would not they bring again those Stragglers into the first way of their Rules and Constitutions, that is to say, the Jacobins to the Jacobinesses, the Mendicant to the Nuns of that Order? But what would become of the Jesuites, and the Chartereux said I to him, for neither St. Ignatius, nor St. Bruno drew up Rules for the Female Sex. Oh! that Spaniard, replied he, took care

care enough for that, he did this on purpose that they might have occasion to forrage over all with impunity ; besides following his fancy which was something Pederaste, he has put 'em into employments, wherein they find amongst the youth moments of satisfaction, which they prefer before all the Divertisements of others.

As for the *Chartreux*, continued he, as Retreat is strictly ordered them, they seek in themselves the pleasures they cannot take with others, and by a brisk animated Warr, they make a shift to subdue the Highest Temptation & Insurrection of the flesh. They renew the combat as often as the Enemy makes any against them, they employ their resistance in all their vigour, and call these sorts of Expeditions ; *The Warr of Five against One*. Well did not the Disciple of St Bernard speak very Learnedly ?

Ag. He did indeed, I should have

have taken delight in hearing him.

Ang. There's nothing more certain than if this was practised, and that if in the disorder it self, some rules were followed, all would go much better. It is now a year since that a young *Nun* would not have been so unhappy as she has since been, if she had done with the Provincial of her Order, what she did with that of another. Thou hast perhaps heard talk of Sister *Cecil*, and of Father *Raymond*.

Agn. No I han't; tell me what thou knowest of 'em.

Ang. Sister *Cecil* is a *Nun* of the Order of *St. Augustine*, and Father *Raymond*, was the Provincial of the *Jacobins*. I shall not tell thee after what manner he insinuated himself into the Breast of that innocent Creature, who had been inaccessible to all others before. But thou shalt only know, that he acquired her to himself, that never friendship was more strict and engaging

gaging, and they could not rest a moment without seeing or receiving News from one another. This Commerce was taken notice of in the Society; and the Provincial *Augustin*, who Govern'd that Convent, having received an inkling of this matter, was ready to die for vexation; because he had never been able to obtain those Privacies with her, though he had used all manner of means to corrupt her. She was the greatest Beauty in that *Monastery*. Being thus netled to the quick, he wrote to the *Abbeſs*, and gave her order to have an eye upon *Cecil's* Behaviour. It was an easy matter for this Guardian, quickly to discover some extravagancies, for that the Parties were not upon their Guard; but what they saw was only little wantonings; but however these were sufficient to give ground and occasion to a jealous man, who had the Power in his hand to misuse a Poor *Nun*.

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Nevertheless

Nevertheless he did not entertain such a design, but purpos'd to himself, though making use of that occasion, to have from her what he had not been able to obtain before. He wrote to her himself, that the business might not make a noise, and forid her the Grate until his Arrival, being twenty Leagues distant.

Agn. But could any Proof be produced against her, that she had done any notable matter?

Ang. Oh! That's an easy business to find, though there were none, when one has a design to destroy a Person. But all the mischief only came from that she was ill advised. The Provincial being thus arrived, told her, that nothing brought him thither, but the informations of her ill Conduct; that it was a shameful thing for such a young *Nun* as she, to abandon her self to Actions, that could not be nam'd for their Infamousness; and that he was very sorry to find himself obliged,

bliged, to inflict upon her an exemplary punishment. *Cecil* (who was only culpable before man of some little wantonings, as of eying and feeling) told him that it was true, she had often seen the Father *Raymond* they talk'd of, but that she also knew, that she had done nothing with him, that merited any notable reprehension; that she had forbidden him to see her, as soon as she had received Orders for so doing; and that she had thereby shewn, that there was nothing very binding in their Engagement. The Provincial to bring about his design, changing discourse, spoke to her in more softer terms than before, and represented to her, that if any Mortification happened to her upon this account, she her self would be the cause of it; that she might remedy the disorder she had occasioned; and that it was a very easie matter for her, to parry those rigorous corrections, which she could

not fail of falling under, if she did not make use of the advantages she possessed. He took her at the same time by the hand, which he grasped after an Amourous manner, eying her with a smile, which ought to have made her understood the disposition of her *Judges* Heart.

Agn. Did she not make use of what she had most engaging to free her self out of the danger she was in?

Ang. No, she did not; but took a quite contrary course to that she ought to have followed; she imagin'd that it was to try her, that her *Provincial* spoke in this manner, and that his whole scope and designe was, to Judge by her weakness, of what she had been capable to do with the other. Upon this ill foundation, she only answer'd him, who burnt with Love for her, by Coldness and words more than indifferent; which chang'd the heart of that Amourous Priest, who of a tender Lover became by these means

means an implacable Judge. Whereupon he proceeded according to the Formes, in the information of *Cecils* process; he received the depositions which jealousie and flattery put into the mouth of several of her Companions, and condemned this poor Child to be whipt till Blood come, to fast ten *Frydays* on *Bread and Water*, and to be excluded from the Parlour six *Months*: So as one may say, she was punished for having been too Wise, and for not suffering her self to be corrupted by the Brutality of her Superiour.

Agn. Good God! this story moves me strangely to Compassion; and I look upon that poor *Nun*, as an Innocent Victime, offered up to the rage of a Furious man, and I make no difference between her, and the Eleven thousand Virgins.

Ang. Thou art in the right; for these are said to have been slain, because they would not satisfy the Passion of a man, and poor *Cecil*

was only outrag'd out of the same Motive & Reason. As there is no Animal in the World is more Luxurious than a *Monk*, so there is none more Maligne and more Vindictive, when his Flames are despised. I have read upon this Subject a Story of a cursed *Capuchin*, in a Book Intituled the *Goat at Rutt*. But now we talk of Books, prethee tell me what those are which thou hast received during my Retreat? I expect to have the Reading of 'em.

Agn. With all my heart; some of them are pleasant enough, this is the Catalogue of 'em.

Pregnant Chastity, a Curious Novel.

The Jesuites Pastime, a Piece of Gallantry.

The Prison Enlightned, or the Opening of the Little-wicket, all in Figures.

The Journal of the Feuillantine Nuns.

The Prowesses of the Knights of St. Lawrence.

Rules and Statutes of Conny-Borough-Nunnery.

A Collection of Remedies against dangerous Swelling.

Compos'd for the Conveniency of the Religious Ladies of St. George.

The Extrean Unction of the dying Virginity.

The Apostolical Orvietan Compos'd by Four Mendicant Fryers, Expraepto Sanctissimi.

The Monks Devotion.

The Abbots Pastime.

The Chartreux Warr.

The Fruits of the Unitive Life, &c.

I believe I am not mistaken, that I have not forgot one in this List; I have already Read Five or Six of'em, which have pleas'd me infinitely.

Ang. Certainly they have made thee a present of a whole Library. If the Contents be answerable to the Frontispieces, I do not doubt but that they must needs be very diverting: thou hast wherewith to perfectionate thy Wit, and to render thee so as thou oughtest to be,

that is to say, Universal in all Sciences; for there are those, who in the midst of a great deal of light and understanding, do still lye under doubts, which renders 'em sometimes uneasy, and whose consequences are often dangerous. I will tell thee a Story upon this Subject that happened in the *Abbey at Chelles*.

Ag. You must needs have wonderful intrigues, to know all that pass'd most secret in all the *Monasteries*.

Ang. Thou must know, that the *Abbeſs* of that House, being of a very hot Constitution, was used to Bath every Summer for some weeks together. Her Bath was set up according to the prescription of Her Physician, who for the making it thought the better, prescribed a particular Rule and Method to observe, without which it would be of no use. It was intirely to be prepared on the Evening, before she was to go into it, and let the
water

water rest all the Night till the Morrow, and then she might at certain hours go into the Bath. Sweet Scents and Essences were not spared, they were thrown in with profusion, and all that could flatter the Lady's sensuality had place in his Composition.

Agn. Ah these Quacks and Physicians by a pretended Complaisance do thus nourish and inflame Peoples weaknesses!

Ang. Be it as it will; a young *Nun* of the House called Sister *Scholastica*, of above Eighteen years of age, seeing all these Great preparations for my Lady *Abbess*, and perceiving that the Bath was ready the Evening before, entertain'd the design, (as well for easing her self of the inconveniency of the Season, as of her interiour Heat which was not very small) to take hold of the Occasion, to make tryal every Night of that salutary *Lavabo*. And indeed she constantly went into it for eight

days

days together, and found that this gave a Lustre to her plump Body, and that she slept and rested the better for it. She went out of her Chamber about Nine a Clock, and almost Naked in her Smock, went to the place where all was ready; she quickly got off her *Petticoats* and her *Smock*, and thus Stark Naked went she into the *Tub*, where she clean'd and rub'd her self all over, and then afterwards came out, as Clean, as Pure, and as Beautiful as was *Eve* in the Terrestrial Paradise, during the State of her Innocence.

Agn. Was not she discover'd?

Ang. Thoul't presently hear the whole matter. One Night that *Scholastica* was Refreshing her self at the usual Rate, one of the Old *Nuns*, who was not yet asleep, having heard walking in the *Dormitory*, at an hour that according to Custome all *Nuns* were to be Retired, went out of her Chamber, and

and after having sought to no purpose the Person she had heard, she entred into the place where the Bath stood, where she perceived immediately by the Light of the *Moon*, a *Nun* stark Naked, who was rubbing her self with a Napkin, being ready to put on her Smock again. The silly Old *Dowdy* thinking it was the *Abbess*, retired in all haste & begged Pardon for her intrusion. *Scholastica* made her no answer, but could perceive that this Old *Matron* was mistaken, and had taken her for another. Away went she too, after having given the other time enough to withdraw, without intending to come thither again for fear she should be caught.

Agn. Well, but did the thing stop here?

Ang. No, Poor *Scholastica's* Buttocks would have been glad it had.

Agn. How! did that Pretty Creature come to suffer for it?

Ang. The Venerable *Matron* I mentioned

mentioned, having reflected in the Morning upon what she had seen the Night before, thought it convenient to go to my Lady *Abbess*, to make her her particular Excuses for that Encounter, which she might attribute to an ill Curiosity; which she accordingly did, unluckily. This Extreemly Surpriz'd the *Abbess*, and made her believe, that she had had only the leavings of the filth of some infirm *Nun* of her Society: she spoke of it in the *Chappel* next Morning, and commanded (by Virtue of *Holy Obedience*) her who had put her self into the Bath, to declare it. But not one of the Company spoke a Word; *Scholastica* was none of the most scrupulous, and had Wit and Sense, wherefore she held her peace. This General silence put the *Abbess* into despair, she cryed, thundred, threatn'd 'em all; but all to no purpose. At length by the Advice of a *Monk*, she practiz'd a pleasant Stratagem: She caus'd

caus'd all her *Nuns* to assemble, and represented to them, that there was one among them Excommunicated, and in the State of Damnation, for not having revealed what she had been Commanded to declare by Virtue of *Holy Obedience*; that a Holy and Learned man had given her an infallible means to discover her, but that she still allowed her to speak the Truth, and avoid by that means the severe Penance, which she would draw upon her self, by her formal obstinate Disobedience.

Agn. Good Lord! I am terribly afraid for *Scholastica* in this perplexity, for all the Counsel of *Monks* are always pernicious.

Ang. My Lady *Abbess* seeing that this last Constraint had been without effect, she followed the Advice that had been given her. She caus'd a Table in a Room to be cover'd with a *Coffin-Pall*, & set in the midst the Cup of the Sacristie.

This.

This being so dispos'd, she commanded all her Vestals to enter after one another into that Room, and to touch with their right hand the Foot of that Sacred Cup, (these were the Terms she used) that was set upon the Table, that by this means she should know, who it was that so obstinately concealed this wicked Fact so long, because that she would no sooner have put her fingers upon that Sacred Cup, than that the Table would fall upon the floor, and discover by a secret Vertue from above, she who should be Culpable. This was done about Nine a Clock at Night, and in the dark: whereupon they all entred into the Room, and toucht the Foot of the Cup with their hands. *Scholastica* was the only Person who durst not do it, for fear of being discovered, and only toucht the Carpet. After which she retired with the rest into another Room, which was also without Light, from whence

whence the *Abbeſs* made them come to her one after the other, when all the Ceremonies were over. Now it is observable, that ſhe had blacked the foot of the Cup with Oyl and Soot, ſo as it was impoſſible to touch it, without bearing away the marks of it. Thus having lighted a Candle in the Room ſhe was in, ſhe viewed the hands of all thoſe *Nuns*, and found they had all toucht the Cup, except *Scholastica* who had no black upon her fingers, like the reſt of Her Society. This made her judge, that it muſt be ſhe who had committed the fault. This poor innocent Creature, ſeeing her ſelf thus trappan'd by this Trick and Artifice, had recourſe to tears and excuſes, and came off for a couple of Diſciplines, which ſhe received before all the Company. Well! this was only that outside of Religion, which was impiouſly made uſe of, which made her afraid; and if ſhe had made the leaſt reflection upon
the

the impossibility there was, of discovering her by so ridiculous an Artifice, she would not have been found out.

Agn. That's right ; but the *Abbeſs* ought to have pardoned her, upon the account of her Beauty and her Youth.

Ang. She might so, but she did not ; nay, and I have heard say, that the first Discipline, which she ordered her, lasted for above a quarter of an hour ; judge then of the condition the poor Buttocks of that pretty Creature must needs be in.

Agn. They were undoubtedly much like mine when I shewed 'em thee : If it lay in my Power I would condemn that Cursed Counsellour of the *Abbeſs* to be a perpetual Gally Slave ; and if the same business had happened to me, I would have laid so many snares for that *Monk*, by the means of some friends abroad, that I would have made him repent his Stratagem.

Ang.

Ang.

Ang. Dost thou think, that if he had in the least suspected this punishment would have fallen upon *Scholastica*, he would have had a hand in it? No; he imagin'd as well as the *Abbes*, that it was some Old or some Infirm Creature that had been surprized, and it is that that turn'd the Lady *Abbes* Stomach, for having, as she fancied, wash'd her self in the filthy leavings of such Persons.

Agn. For my part I believe she was more at ease, when she knew it was *Scholastica*, who had been dabbling in the Bath; for people are not disgusted with a young neat and handsome Girl, as thou hast represented her to me. The Penance she received puts me in mind of that of *Virginia*, and of the Children of the *Jesuites* four-square-Cap.

Ang. Stay; lie shew you two of 'em I have in my Box, one from Father *Raucourt*, the other from *Virginia*; here read this first.

Agn. This.

Agn. This is almost like a wo-
mans hand, it is so scrawl'd and so
carelessly written.

*Ah God! My Dear Child, now do
I begin to be tyred with this commerce
of Letters; It does but the more Aug-
ment my Flames, and not ease 'em
in the least. It tells me that Virgi-
nia has a kindness for me, but lets
me know at the same time, that it is
impossible for me to enjoy her. Alas!
what strange motions does this mix-
ture of sweetness and bitterness cause
in such a heart as mine! I had heard
say, that Love sometimes inspires those
with Wit who were unprovided of it,
but I find in my self a quite contrary
effect; and I may truly say, that it
takes from me what it doth present
to others; several take notice of this
change, but they are ignorant of the
cause of it. I yesterday Preached at the
Convent of the Nuns, of the Visitation,
never was I more animated, & inspired;
I ought Conformably to my Subject have
entertain'd the Company with Morti-
fication*

fication and Penance; But my whole Sermon and Discourse was made up of affections, and tenderesses, and sailleys and transports. It is you, Virginia, who causes all this disorder; wherefore take compassion of the confusion I am in, and endeavour betimes to find the means of bringing me back to my right Senses.

Ang. Well Agnes, what dost thou say of this Child got in haste?

Agn. I find it worthy of its Father, and capable all naked as it is of Dress and Ornament, not only of keeping to it self a heart that it possesses, but even of exciting there new motions.

Ang. Thou art in the right; for in some the most careless stile is always the most perswasive; and oftentimes all the Eloquence of an Oratour cannot produce those soft Transports in a Breast, as are only the effects of a less lofty term, but more expressive. This is a Truth I can give Testimony of, since I
have

have tryed it several times in my self. But let us see a little, if *Virginia* expresses her self so well as her Lover.

Agn. Give me the Letter that I may read it.

Ang. There take it, tis rather a Note than a Letter, for its but five or six Lines in all.

Agn. Her hand is little different from mine.

Ah! how cunning are you in your words, and you know to perfection the art of disturbing the little Repose a poor innocent Creature who lov's you has left? can you with reason ask me, if I think on you? Alas, my Dear, consult but with your own self, and believe that we cannot both be animated with one and the same Passion, without undergoing the like and equal torments.

Adieu! be mindful of the breaking of our Chaines; Love renders me Capable of any enterprize. Ah! how much weakness does it cause in me!

Ang.

Ang. In good earnest, Dost thou not think this Note more tender than the Letter?

Agn. Yes indeed. We may say it is all Heart, and that two or three Periods express as much the disposition of the Soul of a Lover, as would do two Pages of a Romance. But I do not see that it is an answer to that we have read from Father *Raucourt*.

Ang. No, 'tis not, 'tis to an other which was not sent me.

Agn. I pity the misfortunes of those two Lovers; especially I bear an extream Compassion to the troubles of *Virginia*, for undoubtedly she spends her time at present in a great deal of anxiety and affliction, and leads a very wretched tedious life.

Ang. If she had not kept the Letters and Notes that had been sent to her, she would not have been so unhappy; for then they would not have discovered the Design she had,
of

of making her escape out of the Monastery.

Agn. Then it is undoubtedly that she means, when she says in Her Letter, *Think of the rupture of our Chains.* I should not have hit of the right sence of these words; Alas! poor Creature, how unhappy had she been, had she committed that egregious mistake: Alackaday, Alackaday! What is not Love capable of doing, when it meets with opposition.

Ang. As soon as the Rector of the *Jesuites* had learnt what passed, by the Letter he found in the Bonnet, he gave notice thereof to the *Abbess*, who went immediately with Her Assistance to search *Virginia's* Chamber, where she found in her Box an infinite Number of Letters and other trifles, which discovered to her the truth of what she could not have believed, if she had not seen it. As she highly loved *Virginia*, she onely shew'd
in

in these proceedings, what she could not well conceal, and moderated the punishment which the Constitutions do prescribe.

Agn. The *Jesuite* was more happy since he came off onely for Changing his Province.

Ang. Phoogh! You're mistaken, this storm did not blow over so easily as thou imaginest. He is at present out of Society. Thou must know that as in that Society all is hing'd and established upon Esteem and Reputation, it is impossible for a man of honour to remain in it, after he has lost by some accident, those two things which so agreeably flatter the Ambition of mankind. Father *Raucourt* seeing himself thus fallen, by the misfortune I told thee, from that degree of Glory, which he had acquired by his Merits, and wherein he had alwayes maintained himself by his Prudence, set little value upon the Indulgence which his Superiours
offe-

offered him, and thought onely of abandoning them; which he did a while agoe, and retired into *England*.

Agn. What can a man do in a forreign Country, who has no other fortune than knowledge, nor other Estate than Philosophy.

Ans. What can he do? Why he can render himself more useful to the Common-Wealth, than all the Artificers who compose it: He may by his writings give vigour to Laws the most opposite to the Inclination of the people; he may carry the Glory of a Nation into places the most remote: In short, there are very few Employments, but which he can worthily acquit himself of, and from which the State may draw considerable Advantages. As what I say is not void of Reason, so neither is it without example; and I have learnt from a *Dominican*, that a Male-content of their Order was at the Court of
that

that Kingdom, whither *Raucourt* made his Retreat, and that he made a very fine Figure there, in the quality of a Resident or Envoy of a *German Prince*.

Ag. Without doubt he would have conducted *Virginia* into that Countrey, if they had brought about their designs. Alas! there would be but few reclused of either Sex, if those who go into *Claysters* had but time given them to reflect upon the Advantages of Civil Liberty, and upon the ill Consequences of a Fatal Engagement.

Ang. Why dost thou talk at this rate? Cannot we enjoy as perfect Pleasures within the compass of our walls, as those do who are abroad? The Obstacles that oppose them, do but serve to give 'em the better taste and relish, when that after having cunningly and dextrously surmounted 'em, we possess what we have desired. It would be both

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maligne

maligne and ungrateful, to denfure the Divertizements both of *Monks* and *Nuns*; for I fhould ask thofe people, is it not true, that Continen- cy is a gift of God, which he gratifies whom he pleafes with, and which he only beftows upon thofe whom he thinks fitting to Honour! This being fupposed, he will only require an account of that Prefent from thofe to whom he gave it.

Ag. I do well enough under- ftand the ftrength of that reafon, but one might fay that the Vows by which we folemnly engage our felves, do render us refponfible be- fore him.

Ang. And doft thou not perceive, that thofe Vows which thou ma- keft in the hands of men, are on- ly Songs? Canft thou with reafon oblige thy felf to give what thou haft not? And what thou canft not have, unlefs it pleafes him to whom thou offerft it, to grant it thee?

Judge

Judge from hence of the Nature of our engagements; and if to the rigour we are held according to God, to the effect of our promises; since that they contain in 'em a moral impossibility, thou hast nothing to say to destroy this argument.

Agn. 'Tis true, I have not, and this is what ought to set our minds at rest?

Ang. For my part I may say, that nothing troubles me, I spend my time in an Equallity of mind, which renders me insensible to the Torments which weary and fatigue others. I see all, hear all, but few things are capable of moveing me; and if my Repose were not troubled by some Corporal Indisposition, there is not a Person could Live with more Tranquility than I do.

Agn. But in a Conduct so opposite to that of other Cloisters, What do you think of the disposition of

You

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their

their Souls, and those Actions which are followed as they Preach, with so many merits, do not they tempt by the hopes they propose ? They might tell us, that Libertinism is often capable to furnish us with Reasons for our own ruine. For what is more Holy than the Meditation of Celestial things, wherein they imploy themselves ? What is more Laudible and Praise-worthy than that great Piety which they put in practice, and the fastings and austerities wherewith they mortifie themselves, can they pass under the Notion of Fruitless Works ?

Ang. Ah ! my poor Child, how weak are all these obligations. Thou must know, that there is a great deal of difference between Licentiousness & Liberty ; I often in my actions hold my self upon the rim of the latter, but now fall into the disorder of the former. If I do not give bounds to my joy and to my

my pleasures, it is because they are innocent, and that they never wound by their excess the things for which I ought to have a Veneration. But give me leave to tell thee what I think of those Melancholly Fools, with whose manners thou art charmed; dost thou know that what thou callest Contemplation of things Divine, is only at the bottom a sordid Laziness incapable of all Action? That the Motions of that Heroick Piety which thou so much extollest, do only proceed from the disorder of a crack'd Brain; and that to find out the cause that makes them tear themselves like distracted people, you must seek it in the vapours of a Black humour, or in the weakness of their Pericranium?

Agn. I take so much delight in hearing thy Reasons, that I proposed to thee all on purpose as a difficulty which did not make me suf-

for the least doubt; but I hear the
Bell that calls us!

Ang. It is to go to the Refec-
tory, after Dinner we will conti-
nue our Conferences.

The End of the Second Dialogue.

~~which is to be continued to~~
only proceed from the disorder of
a cracked Brain; and that so find
out the cause that makes them tear
themselves like distracted people,
you must look it in the vis-
count of a black humour; or in
the weakness of their Percep-

tion. I take to much delight in
hearing thy reason, that I propo-
sed to thee all on purpose as a dis-
course which should not be the last

Venus

Venus in the Cloister;

OR THE

Nun in Her Smock.

Third Dialogue.

Sister Agnes, Sister Angelica.

Agnes, Ah how Grateful and Pleasant is the Beauty of this Day! It Revives all my Spirits. Let us both retire into that *Alley*, that so we may get rid of the Company of others.

Angelica, We cannot find a more convenient place in all the Garden for our Walk, for the Trees which environ us, give us as much Shade

E 4 as

as is necessary, to hinder our being expos'd to the heat of the Sun.

Agn. True; but it is to be feared that my Lady *Abbes* will come to recreate her self here, for this is the place she most commonly chooses to take the Air in after meals.

Ang. Be not you afraid of her coming to disturb us here, she is indispos'd at present, and if thou knewest but the cause of her indisposition, thou wouldest laugh heartily.

Agn. Why she was well enough yesterday?

Ang. Shee was so, the Disaster only besel her this night, and thou must needs have slept very soundly, if thou didst not perceive that, by her shrieks and bawlings out, she frighted and alarm'd all the Dormitory. I intended to have made it part of our Diversion when I came unto thee this morning; but insensibly our Conversation deviated upon other subjects.

Agn.

Agn. The truth is, I hear nothing but what's publick.

Ang. You know that one of my Ladyes Principal Pleasures consists in nourishing all sorts of Animals, and that she does not content herself with enjoying an infinite number of Birds, she has likewise rendered tame & Domestick, even *Tortoises* and *Fish*. As she makes no secret of this folly, and that she calls this Amusement, *The charms of a Solitary Life*; they all endeavour to Contribute to her Divertizement, by making her presents sometimes of one Creature, sometimes of another. The *Abbot of St. Vallery* having heard that she had rendred, (as he had been given to understand) even *Carps* and *Pikes*, tame and familiar; he sent her four days ago two live *Mackerells*, two *Sea Crabs*, likewise living. After having caus'd the wings of those *Demy-Ducks* to be cut, she put them into the Pond, resolved to make it

her whole business to look after the Craw-Fish; for which reason she caus'd a little Trough to be brought into her Chamber, which she had filled with water, and where she put those *Lobsters*, (so are those *Animals* called). It is hardly to be expressed, what pains she took for their preservation, even to the casting them Sweet-meats and Sugar-plums; in short, she would only feed 'em with the most delicate meats and food.

Agn. Those sort of pastimes are innocent and excusable in youth.

Ang. Yesterday Evening, by ill luck, Sister *Olinda*, who had order to change the water every day in the Trough for the refreshment of the Fish, forgot to do it, which was the cause of all this disorder. You must know that the last night having been very hot, one of these *Lobsters*, finding himself incommoded by the heat it felt, went out of the Trough, and trail'd along the Chamber,

ber, untill that seeing it self without ease, it sought after the water it had left, as its most Natural Element. But as it was much more easy for it to descend than to mount, it was constrain'd to have recourse to the water of my Ladyes Chamber-Pot, where without examining whether it was fresh or salt it possted it self. Some time after our *Abbeſs* had occasion to piſs, and half asleep, and without going out of the Bed, she took her Urinal; but alas! she had like to have been frighted to death, this *Crab-Fiſh* finding it self watered with something too warm a shower, lanced forth towards the place from whence it seem'd to come, and seiz'd it so hard with one of its paws, that I take my word it has left marks there for above this week.

Ag. Ha, ha, ha, This, this indeed is a pleasant Adventure!

Ang. At the very same moment she gave a skriech that awakened

kened all her neighbours, flung the *Looking-glass* upon the floor, and getting up in a terrible fright, called people to her help. In the mean while this *Animall*, that had never met with so delicate and so relishing a bit, let not go its hold. The Mother *Assistent*, and Sister *Cornelia*, were the soonest up; *Cornelia* had much ado to forbear laughing at the sight of such a scene, but check'd her self however the best she was able. But the Mother *Assistent* being dim-sighted, put on her *Spectacles* to see what was the matter, and peering too nigh, the *Crab* caught hold of her nose with the other Claw; this added to *Cornelia's* Diversion, who was forced to cut off the Claws of that Sacrilegious Creature, which till then did not abandon its prey. The Mother *Assistent* withdrew to her own Room, very much concerned at the outrage done to her Reverend Nose; and Sister *Cornelia*, who

is.

is my Lady *Abbeſs's* Confident, ſpent the reſt of the Night with her to comfort her in this diſtreſs. This is the cauſe of our *Abbeſſes* indiſpoſition, which will apparently hinder her from interrupting our conferences.

Agn. Ah Lord! I ſhould not dare to appear if ſuch an accident had happened to me, and that it was come to other peoples knowledge.

Ang. Truly a mighty buſineſs to be aſhamed of, ſhe let nothing be ſeen but what ſhe had often ſhown to others, and the Knights of the Order have plac'd their hands ſeveral times where the *Crab* placed his paw.

Agn. But which of all her Knights is her greateſt Darling.

Ang. I know not well which is, but this I know that a *Jeſuite* viſits her often, and that he has had privacies with her, that give us to underſtand he is one of the *Blew-Ribbons*

Ribbons. I perceived her one day with him in a very fervent Communication; & at another time that she went out with the same Person, I found in the Parlour she went out of, a Napkin wet in certain places with a certain vicious Liquor; she had let it fall neer the window; I do not speak of this Rencontre, I only observed that the loss made her somewhat uneasy.

Ag. n. What needed shee to fear, the Bishop on whom she depends, is wholly at her Discretion, in the visit he has made of this Monastery, he had ordered nothing but what she had before prescribed to him.

Ang. Right, Shee is Mistress of all, and the Directors and Confessors are only received and changed by her Order.

Ag. n. Ah! I could wish with all my heart, that our Common Confessor whom we have at present, did

did but displease her, as much as he does me; what sayest thou to it?

Ang. The truth, is he is very austere, and is capable of putting those to a great deal of trouble who knew not how to behave themselves; but to such as you and I, it ought to be indifferent to us whether it be he, or a less rigorous Person who hears us.

Agn. For my part, I cannot confess the least tynny sin, but that he falls into a Passion. For a thought I accused my self of, he ordered me terrible Mortifications and Penances, and will make me fast two days for the least motion of the Flesh that I shall confess to him. Besides, I know not what most commonly to Entertain him with, for fear of telling him something that should displease him. And I cannot conceive what course thou takest, thou who keepest him so long?

Ang. And

Ang. And dost thou believe me so silly as to declare to him the secret of my heart ; for from that, as I conceive him altogether rigid, I only tell him such things as there is no hold to be laid on ; he cannot conclude from all that he hears from me, but that I am a Maiden of Prayer and Contemplation, who is not acquainted with all the Motions of a Corrupted Nature, which makes him he dares not question me upon that matter ; the severest Penance I have received, is *Five Pater Nosters*, and the *Litanies*.

Agn. But what dost thou say to him then, for only having broke silence, or droll'd upon a Person of the Community, (which is nothing) he will Schooll me for a quarter of an hour

Ang. All these faults being designed in particular, with their Circumstances, of small, become sometimes more Considerable ; and this
is.

is what renders thee subject to his Reprehension. But see the course I take by giving Ear to my last Confession. After having most humbly begg'd his Blessing, with my eyes down, my hands lifted up, and my Body bending: I began in this manner.

My Father, I am the greatest Sinner on the Earth, and the weakest of all Creatures, I almost ever fall into the same faults.

I accuse my self of having troubled the Tranquility of my soul, with Universal Divagations, which have put my Breast in disorder.

Of not having had sufficient Recollection of mind, and of having spent too much time in external Occupations.

Of having dwelt too long upon the Operations of the understanding, spending therein the most of my Prayers to the prejudice of my will, which remain'd by that means dry and barren.

Of

Of having at another time suffered my self to be engag'd in Affection, and exposed thereby to troublesome Distractions, and to a Lazyness of Spirit, contrary to the methodicall perfection of the Contemplative.

Of having kept too much in me, too much of what is belonging to me, without disengaging my heart from all Created things, by a generous act of suppression of self Love, Interests, Desires and Wills, and of my self.

Of having made an offering of my heart without having first of all Tranquillized and Pacified it, and freed it from the trouble of the too unruly Passions and disorderly affections.

Of having suffered my self to be led away by the inclinations of the Old man, and by the proneness of an un-repaired Nature, instead of making a Divorce from all, for the gaining all.

Of not having been carefull to renew my self by a review of my self, in my self, and of making the Reparation

paration in me of what was decayed, &c.

Well *Agnes*, Thou mayest judge of the whole piece by this Sample. This is not the third part of my Confession, but the rest renders me no more Criminal than this beginning.

Agnes. The truth is, that I should be very much puzzled, were I to order Penances to Sins so ingeniously laid open; and yet this is the only way to deceive the Curiosity of young Directours, and avoid the Reprimands of the Old.

Ang. The Latter are commonly the least tractable; for I have seen but few Fasts, since I have been in the Society, but what have been pretty indulgent.

Agnes. The truth is, that they have not all the same rigours, Witness him who Imprinted Devotion so deep in the Soul of two of our Sisters, that they found themselves very much incommoded Nine Months afterwards.

Ang.

Ang. Good Lord! 'Tis well they had so much Wit and Cunning, to conceal it as they did, and to hinder this job from being blab'd abroad. It came not so much as to the knowledg of the Bishop himself, but when there could no longer any proof be made thereof. It puts me in mind of an *Italian-Jesuite*, who one day Confessing a young *French Gentleman*, who had learnt the Language of the Country, gave an Exclamation without thinking of it, which made known his weakness. The Penitent accus'd himself of having spent the night with a young Lady of one of the Principal Families of *Rome*, and of having enjoyed her according to his desire; The Good Father looking very wishfully & attentively on the Person who spoke to him, being a handsome youth & well made, forgot himself so far as to the Office he performed, and imagining himself to be in a free Conversation,

tion, so transported was he, he ask'd the young Spark, if she was Beautifull, what Age she was of, and how many times he had done the job with her? The *French* man making his answer, that he had found her a perfect, exquisite Beauty, that she was but Eighteen years Old, and that he had done it three times. *Ah qual gusto Signior*, Cryed he then pretty loud; that's to say, Ah the delight and pleasure of the enjoyment of such a Creature!

Agn. This Saily was not unpleasant, and very capable of Exciting the heat of a Penitent to the repentance of such a fault.

Ang. What wouldst thou have, they are men as well as others: and I have heard one of my friends say, who was in those sort of Employments, that often a Confessor would not expose himself so much by going to a Bawdy-House, were it not for what the devout whisper in his Ear.

Agn.

Ag. For my part, I should find methinks that Occupation pretty Diverting, provided I was allowed to make choice of my Penitent: I should take pleasure in hearing *em*, and my imagination would be notably tickled by the account they should give me of their follies. Which would not be without a great deal of pleasure on my Part.

Ang. Alas my Child! Knowest thou what thou askest? if a Devout Woman affords a little pleasure to a Confessor by the ingenious account she gives of her weaknesses, there are a thousand who weary them by their repetitions, who tire them out with their scruples; and when they would with more ease free themselves out of an *Abbyss* than from their doubts. Sister *Dosithea* has for above three years almost, solely taken up the Common Directour of the House by her Questions. It was to no purpose for

. him

him to represent to her, that those
curious Niceties wherewith she tor-
tured her Conscience, never think-
ing she had taken care enough to
examine her self, were not only
useless but likewise vicious and con-
trary to perfection; he could do
no good with her, and was Con-
strain'd to abandon her to her self,
and leave her in her error.

Agn. Methinks however, that she
is at present more reasonable; and
I remember that once we were ob-
liged to lye both together; while
that our *Dormitory* was setting up;
she kept me in discourse, but in
such discourse as was not only far
from any scruple, but likewise which
I found at that time somewhat too
free and libertine. Besides a thou-
sand wantonings to which she ex-
cited me, by the Relation of an
hundred Stories, the most Smutty
and Lascivious imaginable.

Ang. I perceive thou knowest
not how she was freed out of the
error

error Superstition had plung'd her
so deep in: her Confessor had no
share in her delivery; we may
say that it is Devotion it self that
has produced this change and that
of a Maiden extremely Scrupulous;
it has made a Religious altogether
reasonable. I am content to tell
all I know of this matter, from
her own mouth.

Ag. I do not well conceive this,
for to say that Devotion can rid
a person of her Scruples, is to say,
that a blind man is capable of free-
ing another from a Precipice.

Ang. Hear me but, and thou
wilt find I have urg'd nothing but
what is true. Sister *Dosithea* as you
may perceive by her eyes, is na-
turally of the most tenderest a-
mourous Complexion imaginable;
this poor Creature at her entrance
into Religion, fell into the hands
of an old Director superlatively igno-
rant, and so much the more an E-
nemy of Nature, as that his Age
rendered

rendred him uncapable of all the pleasures it proposes. Thus finding that the inclination of his Penitent was carnally given, and that the failing, and weaknesses she accused herself of every day, were a certain sign of it; He thought it was his duty to reform that Nature which he called Corrupted, and that it was allowed him to erect himself into a second Rapairer. To bring this design about, he cast into her mind all the Seeds of Scruples, of doubts, of torments, and pains of Conscience he could bethink himself of. He did it with so much the more success, as that he found a disposition in her to 'em, and that the ingenuous Confessions he had often heard from this innocent Creature, made him know the extream tenderness she had in what concerned her Salvation.

Whereupon he gave her a description of the way to Heaven in such course colours, that they would have been capable of discouraging and disgusting from the persuit of it, a Person less zealous, and less fervent than Sister *Dosithea*. He only spoke to her of the Destruction of that Body, which opposed it self to the enjoyment of the Spirit, and the horrible penances wherewith he loaded her

he said, means absolutely necess-
 hout which it was impossible for
 arrive at that Celestiall *Jerusa-*

he not being capable to defend
 f against these arguments, suffer'd
 lf to be led away blindly by the
 eet Devotion, with which she was
 ated: The plain practice of God's
 andments, was no longer thought
 r to be of any great consideration
 him, they were to be accompa-
 ith works of supererrogation, and
 ith all this Clutter, she was still
 ontinual fear of the paines of a
 World, with which she was so
 reatned. As it is impossible here
 o destroy in us what we call Con-
 ce, she was never in peace with
 , it was a perpetual War which
 prudently made upon her poor
 and the fierce Conflicts she in-
 upon it, were rarely followed with
 ort Cessation.

Alas! poor Creature, I pitty
 and how strangely should I have
 ved with Compassion, had I seen
 hat errour,

As her amorous disposition cau-
 er, her greatest failings, She
 neglected

neglected nothing of all that could extinguish her most innocent flames, fastings, hair shifts, and all other rigorous usage were put in practice, and the change of a more reasonable Directour than her former, brought not the least Diminution to her folly. She was four whole years in this condition, and would have remained so in it still, had not a fit of Devotion forced her out of it. Amongst the Counsels she had received from her ancient Directour, she practised one with an unequall'd regularity; which was, to have recourse to a Picture of St. *Alexis*, the Mirrour of Chastity, which was in her Oratory, and to prostrate herself there,, when she saw her self pressed by temptations, or that she felt in her those movements which she accused her self so often of. Thus one day that she found her self more moved than usual, and that her nature attacked her brisker than was customary, she had recourse to her Saint; represented to him with tears in her eyes, her face upon the floor, and her heart lifted up towards Heaven, the extreame danger she found her self in; related to him with a wonderful candour and simplicity, to how little purpose she had defended her self,

and used all her efforts to repress the violent transports she was seized with.

She accompanied her prayers with Penance and Discipline, which she inflicted in the presence of this welbeloved Pilgrim. But as they tell of him that he was not in the least toucht with the Beauty of his Wife on the first Night of his Wedding, but abandoned her on the Contrary, the beautiful Body of this innocent Creature exposed naked before him, made no impression upon his Spirit, and the lashes she so briskly swunged her self with did not move him in any wise to compassion. After having clawed her self off in this manner, she recommended herself anew to this good *Roman*, and withdrew as one victorious, to go pass her time in Peace in less fatiguing exercises.

Agn. Good God! What a bussle and hurry does Superstition make in the soul when it has once got possession of it!

Ang. *Dosithea* was hardly got out of her Room, than that she found her body all of a fire, and her mind inclined to the pursuit of a pleasure which she was not yet acquainted with. An extraordinary tickling animated all her senses, and her imagination filling it self with a thousand lascivious Ideas left this

Poor

Poor Religious half vanquished. In this pittious condition she returned to her Intercessour, redoubled her prayers, and conjured him by all that Devotion can have most sensible to grant her the gift of Continency; her fervency did not stop there, she took Instruments of penance in hand, and made use of 'em for a quarter of an hour together, with the maddest and most indiscreet zeale imaginable.

Agn. Well but this gave her some ease, did it not?

Ang. Alas! Far from that, she retired from her Oratory more and more transported with Love than before. The Bell rung to *Vespers* much ado had she to assist at 'em all the while. Sparkes of fire flew out at her eyes, and without knowing what she suffered, I admired her instability, and at her being in so continual a motion.

Agn. But from whence proceeded this?

Ang. This was occasioned by the extream heat she felt over all her Body, and especially in those parts where she had disciplined her self; for you must know these sorts of exercises were so far from extinguishing the flames wherewith she was consumed, that on the contrary they

had more and more augmented them, and had reduced that poor creature into such a condition, as that she was hardly any longer able to bear with it. This is easy to conceive, forasmuch as the lashes she had clawed her backside with, had excited heat in all the Neighbourhood, had brought thither the purest and most subtile spirits of the blood, which to find an Issue conformable to their nature all of fire, did prick so notably the parts where they were assembled, as if it were to make a passage.

Agn. Did the conflict last long?

Ang. It began and ended in a day; for as soon as Vespers were over, *Dosithea*, as if she could not directly have addressed her self to God, went to prostrate her self again before her Oratory, Prayed, Wept, Groaned, but all to no purpose. She found her self more pressed than ever, and to insult a-new this obstinate Nature, she took her whip in hand, and lifting up her Peticoats and smock to her Navel, and tying them up with a girdle, she outraged her buttocks with extraordinary violence, and that part which put her to so much pain being all uncovered. This raging having lasted for some time, her strength fail'd
her

her for that cruel exercise, nay fl
not enough left to untie her clothes,
exposed her half naked, she leane
her head upon the Bed, and in
reflection upon the Condition of
kind which she called Unhappy, in
they were born with motions th
condemned, tho' it was almost in
ble to bridle them. She fell into
of a trance, but it was an amou
trance caused by the fury of the passi
and which made that poor young C
enjoy such a delight as ravish'd he
the very Heavens. In that moment
ture uniting all its forces, and Virgi
which till then had been a Captive, d
vered it self without any help with an
petuosity, in leaving there the Keeper
tended upon the floor for an evid
token of her Defeat.

Agn. O Lord! Oh Lord! I wish I h
been by!

Ang. Alas! What pleasure could t
have been to thee? Thou wouldst h
seen that innocent Creature sighing an
panting, which she knew not the cause o
Thou wouldst have seen her in an ec
stasy, her eyes half dying without Vir
city or Vigour, yeilding to the Laws
meer Nature, & lose mangre all her ca

that Treasure, the keeping whereof had put her to so much pain.

Agn. Well this is what I should have taken delight in, to view her thus all naked, and to observe curiously all the transports, that Love would have caused in her at the moment she was overcome.

Ang. As soon as *Dosithea* was recovered from this Rapture, her mind which was before clouded and buried in thick darkness, found it self unveiled at the very instant of all its obscurity: Her eyes were opened, and reflecting upon what she had done, and upon the little virtue of her Saint, whom she had so much invoked, she knew she had been in an errour, and thus raised her self by her own strength through a surprizing *Metamorphosis*, above all things which she durst not before look upon, and had nothing but a contempt for what before she had the greatest Veneration.

Agn. That is to say, that of Scrupulous, she became Indevout, and Irreligious, and that she made no more Offerings to all the little Saints she adored before.

Ang. Thou takest things in a wrong sence; we may rid our selves of Superstition without falling into Impiety; which

which was what *Dosithea* did; she had learnt by experience, that it was to the Sovereign Physitian, that recourse is to be had to in one's weaknesses and failings, that temptations were not in the power of the faithful, and that in the most submissive Soul, there often arose involuntary thoughts and motions, which however could not occasion any fault or imperfection. Thou seest how that I told thee nothing but what is true, when I urg'd that it was Devotion that freed her from her scruples.

Almost the same thing happened to an *Italian* Nun, Who after having prostrated her self very often before the figure of a Child newly born, which she called her little *Jesus*, and had conjured it several times to grant her the same thing by tender words which she uttered with an extraordinary affection. *Dolce Signore Mio Gjesu, fatte mi la gratia*, seeing that all her prayers were without effect, she fancied that the Infancy of him she invoked, was the cause thereof, and that she should find better redress in addressing her self to the Image of the eternal Father, which represented him in a more advanced age: She went thereupon again to her little Lord,

whom she upbraided with his little virtue, protesting that she would never amuse her self with him, nor any little Child of his sort; and left him in that manner applying to him these words of the Proverb. *Chi S'impaccia con Fanciulli, con Fanciulli si ritrova.* Do but reflect a little how far superstition does sometimes go, & to what an extremity of folly ignorance does sometimes lead us.

Agn. The truth is that these examples are a sensible proof of what you now say, and that the simplicity of this Nun is unparellel'd: The *Italian Women* however doe not pass for fools, they are said to have an infinite deal of Wit, and that few things are capable of puzzling them, and escaping their understanding.

Ang. That is true, generally speaking, but there are ever some who are not so sharp, and so quick witted as the others. Besides, it is not alwaies a sign of stupidity to have doubts and scruples, for you must know, my Dear *Agnes*, that (unless it be things of Religion) there is nothing certain or sure in this World, there is no side but may be maintained, we have commonly only false and confused

fused Notions of those things, which we think we know most perfectly. Truth is yet more unknown, and all the pains and artifices of men, who apply themselves to the search of it, have not yet been able to render it sensible to us, tho' they have often fancied they had found it out.

Agn. But how must we then manage our mind in so universal an Ignorance?

Ang. You must my Child, to prevent the being mistaken and abused, Consider things from their Rise, view them in their pure naturals, and afterwards judge of them conformably to what we see thereof. You must above all avoid suffering your Reason to be prepossessed and prejudiced, neither must ye suffer it to be besieged by the sentiments of others, which commonly are only Opinions. And you must be cautious, how you suffer your self to be taken by the eyes, and by the ears; that is to say, by a thousand exteriour things, which are often made use of for the seducing our senses, but still preserve our mind free and disengaged, from the silly movings, and childish Maxims, with which the Vulgar is infatuated, who like Brute animals run after all that is present.

'em, provided it be gilded with some fine appearance.

Agn. I understand all this well enough, and I fancy too that thy Argument might be pushed on much farther, and comprehend therein many things which thou exemptest from it. I must own there is a great deal of pleasure in hearing thy discourse, and though thou were't not so young, and so lovely as thou really art, thy Witt alone would render thee amiable. Priddee buss me once.

Ang. With all my heart, My Dear Creature, I am overjoyed with pleasing thee in any thing, and with having found in thee so much disposition to receive the instructions which thou wantest. When our minds are cleared of those clouds of Darkness, and freed from all manner of disquiet, there is not a moment in our whole lives, but that affords us some pleasures, and which may procure to us recreation from the very torments and scruples of others. But let us lay aside all this morality, wherein I have insensibly engaged myself. Kiss me my little Mignon, I love thee more than my own life.

Agn.

Agn. Well, are you satisfied? thou little thinkest that People may see us here.

Ang. And what reason have we to fear? Let us go into that *Arbour* and there no body can see us. But *I* am not yet satisfied, thy kisses have nothing that's common, give me one after the *Florentine* way?

Agn. I believe thou art mad? Does the World kiss after the same manner? What dost thou mean by kissing after the *Florentine* way?

Ang. Come and I'll teach it thee.

Agn. Oh! Lord thou sets me all of a Fire! Ah what a Lascivious way hast thou with thee! Prethee stand off; Ah how thou huggest me, thou devourest me!

Ang. I must pay and reward my self for the Lessons that I give thee. Now this is the way that persons use in kissing, who really Love one another, by Amourously Lanching the tongue between the Lips of the Object one Adores; for my part I find nothing more sweet, and more delicious, when we acquit our selves of it in due manner, and I never practice it without being Ravisht into an Extasy, and without feeling through all my Body an extraordinary Titilation, and

a certain I know not what, that I cannot express to thee, than by telling thee, that it is a secret Pleasure which spreads it self Universally into all the most secret parts of my self, which penetrates into the very bottom of my Heart, and which I have right to term, *An Abridgment of Sovereign Voluptuousness*. But what not a word; what sence doth it raise in thee?

Agn. Did I not tell it thee sufficiently, when I let thee know that thou puttest me all in a flame; but whence comes it that thou callest these sort of kisses a *kiss after the Florentine mode*?

Ang. The reason is, that amongst all the *Italians*, the *Ladies of Florence* pass for the most Amourous, and do generally Practise this kiss after the manner thou hast received it from me. They take a singular delight therein, and say they do it in imitation of the *Dove*, which is an innocent Bird; and that they find therein I know not what that's Lascivious and Poignant, which they do not find and tast in others. I am amaz'd that the *Abbot* and the *Mendicant* did not teach thee this during my retreat? for they have travelled *Italy*, and in all probability they have rendered them-

selves

selves knowing in all the most secret practices of Love, which are peculiar to those of the Country.

Agn. Truly my mind was employed in something else, than these simple trifles when they came to see me, for me to remember 'em at present. I know very well, that there is no sort of Careless and Follies, but what their Amorous fury bethought it self of; but indeed the Pleasure I took therein was so Great, and the Ravishment those Transports caused in me so Excessive, that I had not sufficient freedom of Judgment left to reflect thereon.

Ang. The Truth is, that the sweet moments, wherein we enjoy that voluptuousness, doe so possess us, that we are not capable of withdrawing our selves by any application of our memory, nor to make an *Agenda* at that instant of all that passes within our selves. Yet I do not doubt but the *Abbot* and the *Mendicant* have extended their Gallantry so far; for besides thy having a Divine mouth, they are perfectly informed of all the softest and most Engaging arts and ways of those who know Passionately how to Love.

Agn. Alas ! They know but too much

of those matters, for persons consecrated to the Altars and devoted to Continency.

Ang. This is pleasant in you indeed, and those who know thee not would think that thou speakest seriously. But shall I tell thee my thought? I fancy that they cannot know too much, but that they might practise less? For certain it is; that having the direction of Souls, they ought to have a perfect knowledg of Good as well as Evil, for the making a just distinction, and for exhorting with the more Vehemence, to the Love and pursuit of the one, and Preaching to us with the like zeal the avoiding and the aversion of the other. But they do nothing less than this, and the ill Books they draw their lights from, Corrupt their VVills as well as Enlighten their Understandings?

Agn. I fancy thou mistakest and abusest the terms, and that thou dost not call to mind, that amongst the Learned there is no Books that of its nature bears the Title of forbidden, and that the use alone we make thereof, gives it the quality of good, bad, or indiffe, rent.

Agn. Good God! Thy talking
at

at this rate, makes me think thou ravest, and thou must agree with me, there are certain Books all whose parts are bad, and whose instructions are essentially opposite to good Morality and the practice of Vertue. What canst thou say of the *School of Venus*, and of that *Infamous Philosophy*, that has nothing but what's flat and insipid, and all whose poor and silly Reasonings can only perswade low and vulgar Spirits, or only touch those who are least corrupted, or who of themselves suffer themselves to be led away to all manner of weaknesses.

Agn. I own that that Book may be placed in the ranks of things useless, nay of those that are forbidden; I wish I could recover again the time that I employed in reading it, and there was nothing in it that pleas'd me, nor but what I condemn'd. The *Abbot* who shew'd it me, gave me another which is almost upon the same matter, but which treats it and manages it with much more Wit and Ingenuity.

Ang. I know what Book thou meanest; it's as bad (as to manners) as the former, and though the purity of its Stile, and its easy Eloquence have something

something agreeable, this does not hinder it from being infinitely dangerous, since the Flame and the briskness which sparkle there in many places, do only serve to make people swallow with the better gust the venom wherewith it is filled, and insinuate it insensibly into the hearts of those that are the least susceptible; its Title is, *The Academy of Ladyes: Or the Seven Satyrical Dialogues of Aloisia*. I have had it for above this Week in my hands, and he from whom I received it, explained to me the most difficult passages, and gave me a perfect understanding of all it has mysterious. Especially he interpreted to me these words, which are in the Seventh Dialogue, *Amori, vera Lux*, and discovered to me the anagramatical sence which they concealed, under the simple appearance of the inscription of a Medal. I fancy it was of this Book, that thou hadst a design to speak?

Agn. Right, it was so. Lord, Lord, how ingenious it is in inventing new Pleasures for a satiated and disgusted mind! With what Points and with what Spurs does it revive that Lust that is the most lulled asleep, the most languishing, nay and that which is no longer

longer able! What extravagant Appetites! What strange Objects! VVhat unknown Meats does it Offer! But perceive *I* am not yet so knowing it as thou art.

Ang. Alas! my poor Child, the knowledge thou aspirest to, cannot but be prejudicial to thee? The Pleasures we propose to our selves, ought to be bounded by the *Laws*, by Nature, and by Providence, and all the Maximes which that Book is capable of instructing thee with almost equally deviate from those things. Take my word, all Extremities are dangerous; and there is a certain Middle way, which we cannot vary from without falling into the Precipice. *Let us Love*, that is not prohibited; *Seek after Pleasure*, as long as it is Lawful; but let us shun and avoid, what can only inspire Debauchery, and let us not suffer our selves to be perswaded by an Eloquence which only flatters us to our Ruine, and which only expresses it self well to hurry us the more easily to mischief.

Agn. Goodly, Goodly, VVith your fine Morals forsooth! *I* find you know how to Gild the Pill when you please! Not but that *I* yeild to your Reasons, and blame all those things which thou condemnest,

demnest, but *I* cannot forbear laughing to see thee Preach Reformation with so much heat, and that *I* hear thee speaking to the dumb, and to the blind : such as are our Sisters, who will receive no rules, but such as they propose to themselves.

Ang. You are in the right ; and *I* own it is time ill bestowed, to labour the suppressing of Vice, and the excelling of Virtue, in the Corruption of the Age we live in ; the Disease is too great, and the Contagion too Universal to be remedied by plain V-Vords, and to be cured by a Potion and Preparation that can only act upon the mind. This is not my design, in the least, but *I* was only very willing to let thee know, that *I* do not approve of the Libertinisme of those Persons, who never enjoy perfect Pleasures, unless they go seek them in the lessons of a Corrupted imagination, beyond the most inviolable bounds of Nature, and even into the most dissolute Licentiousness of pass'd Fables.

I am no enemy to Sports, and Delights, nor am *I* wedded to that troublesome Vertue which our Age is not capable of. *I* know the most Noble soul cannot be Mistress of its passions, nor purged from other humane infirmities

as

as long as it is wedded to our Body.

Agn. Ah *I* am pleas'd with this return! and this reasonable indulgence may be perhaps allowed of. For what hurt can there be found in pleasure when it is well regulated? Something of necessity must be allowed to the temperament of the Body, and comply with the weakness of our minds, since we receive them so as Nature gave us them, and that it lies not in our Power to pick call and chuse 'em. We are not responsible for the freaks, fancies, propensities and inclinations which it give us; if they are faults, 'tis it that is culpable and ought to be blamed. And men cannot be upbraided with the vices that are born with them, or which only proceed from their Birth.

Ang. Thou speakest reason, thou Darling of my Heart, and *I* cannot express to thee the joy *I* feel, when that thy VVords make me see the Progress that thou hast made by my instructions. But let us no longer puzzle and weary our Brains, after the search and ripping up of other Peoples Crimes, let us bear with what we cannot reform, let us not touch nor glance upon Evils, that would undoubtedly discover the insufficiency of
our

remedies. Let us live for our selves,
without making our selves sick with
foreign infirmities, let us Establish in our
souls that Spiritual Peace and Tran-
quillity, which is the Principle of the joy
and the Beginning of the happyness which
we may reasonably desire.

For my part I am already in
that peaceable enjoyment of the repose,
and of the quiet of Spirit, to which I
say I could only attain to by thy
help. These are Obligations which
I never sufficiently acknowledge;
I renew my Gratitude to that degree
as I lay in my power, since for all
the pains thou hast taken to free me out
of Error I was in, thou must content
thyself with the Affection I have sworn
to thee, and it must serve thee instead of
any other reward.

Alas! My dear Child, what
couldst thou offer me more to my Satis-
faction? I prefer thy Caresses before all
the Treasures in the VVorld; one sole
Kiss of thine Charms me, and puts me
into Rapture. But see, yonder is some-
body coming, let us part to hinder
any suspicion they might have of our
meeting, and discourse. Buss me, my
Dove.

Agn.

Agn. I will so, and it shall be a sucking Kiss, I mean after the mode of *Florence*.

Ang. Ah thou Ravishest me with Delight! I am in a Transport! Ah 'tis too much for me to bear! Thou caushest in me a *Thousand* Pleasures.

Agn. Well, this is sufficient for the present. Farewell *Angelica*, 'tis Sister *Cornelia*, she's a coming.

Ang. I see her, 'tis without doubt to bring me some message from my Lady *Abbess*. Adieu *Agnes*, Adieu my *Heart*, my *Souls-Delight*, my *Love*.

THE END.



